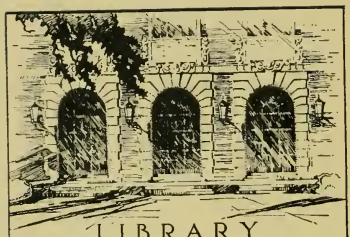

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THREE INTRODUCTORY LECTURES

ON

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

BY

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THREE INTRODUCTORY LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY—ITS CHARACTER AND ITS PROVINCE.

THERE is an early legend of the Eastern Church which, from its beauty no less than from the truth which it embodies, has at all times exercised a powerful fascination over minds the most variously constituted. It is introduced as a divine revelation by Mohammed into the Koran,—it has been adopted and adorned by his followers from Bengal to Africa; it is embodied in the hagiology of the Abyssinian, and vestiges of the story have been discovered in the remote extremities of Scandinavia. It has even stirred the imagination of Gibbon, who has traced "the authentic tradition" to within fifty years of its alleged date. "Among the insipid legends of Ecclesiastical History," he writes, "I am tempted to distinguish the memorable fable of the SEVEN SLEEPERS"[1].

[1] Chap. xxxiii.

The legend is as follows:—The middle of the third century and the reign of the Emperor Decius are memorable in the annals of the Church as the period of the first *general* persecution. At this time there lived in the city of Ephesus seven youths of noble birth, who were Christians. As they refused to offer sacrifice, they were accused before the tribunal; but they fled and escaped to Mount Cælian, where they hid themselves in a cave. Being discovered, they were doomed to perish by the tyrant, who gave orders that the entrance should be firmly secured with a pile of huge stones. They embraced each other, and fell asleep:—and thus they miraculously slept on, while years expanded into centuries. And it came to pass, in the thirtieth year of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, that the slaves of Adolius, to whom the inheritance of the mountain had descended, removing the stones to build a stable for his cattle, discovered the cavern, and when the light penetrated therein, the sleepers awoke. Believing that their slumbers had only lasted for a single night, they rose up, and resolved that one of their number should secretly return to the city to purchase food. Advancing cautiously and fearfully, change everywhere meets his eye: he can no longer recognise the features of the scene once so familiar, and his surprise is increased by the appearance of a gilded Cross on the city-gate by which he entered. He looks around in vain for traces of the heathen worship; he timidly asks a passer-by whether there are any Christians

in Ephesus, and receives for answer, "We are all Christians here." His singular dress and obsolete language soon caused him to be brought before the Præfect. His story told, the magistrates, the Bishop, and the Emperor himself, followed him in haste to the cavern of the Seven Sleepers, whose "faces had the freshness of roses, and a holy and beautiful light was about them."

The legend goes on to describe the feelings of pious joy which replaced their previous fears, as the Sleepers on re-entering the scenes of their youth became gradually conscious of how the world had been transformed. But, let us fancy them to have slumbered on for some ages longer, and the scene of their reanimation to be some great city of modern Europe —for example, the London of our own day; let us suppose the timid messenger to see before him the stately Abbey, with the shadows of its centuries around it; and to have learned from every Cross-surmounted pinnacle, from every answer to his wondering questions, "We are all Christians here,"—we shall the more readily conceive the nature of that mighty change that has passed over the earth since the days of the Cæsars, the moving causes and the events of which it is the province of Ecclesiastical History to describe.

To observe the manifestations of that Divine Power by which this change has been effected; to trace the progress of Christianity as the regenerating element of society; to note the obstacles it has had to en-

counter; to watch the vicissitudes of its conflict with the powers of earth; to mourn over its temporary defeats; to rejoice over its ultimate, though often long deferred, triumphs; to deduce from the tangled details which fill up this chequered scene lessons of practical wisdom, required alike by every Christian nation and by every Christian man;—such is the grand subject in the consideration of which I invite you to accompany me.

It is usual, when approaching the present inquiry, and I believe it to be necessary, to offer some observations as to the peculiar nature and limits of the field over which our investigations must extend. There is a class of questions, indeed, which I am not solicitous to answer:—What is meant by Ecclesiastical History, in the strict sense of the phrase? How far is it to be identified with, how far distinguished from, the general History of the world, the annals of the rise and fall of nations? I believe no judicious writer has ever attempted to fix the boundary here, or narrowly to define the landmarks which separate the story of man's progress on earth, from the records of that Society which guides his road to Heaven. It does not require any nice judgment to discriminate the prominent features characteristic of each; and when I remind you of a parallel and well-known question, I shall, I hope, have satisfied you that I am justified in not desiring to draw a sharp line of distinction between these two departments of historical research:—I allude to the controversy as to the relation be-

tween Church and State, the two essential elements of modern society.

In every theory as to the nature of this relation which deserves notice, the interests of Church and State are ever found so closely commingled, that to attempt to treat of either apart from the other must be found as impossible as it certainly is unphilosophical. It has been truly said by a great statesman, that "the highest duty and highest interest of a body politic alike tend to place it in close relations of co-operation with the Church of Christ"[1]. Whether then, with Hooker, we believe "the Church and the Commonwealth" to be "personally one Society," which is thus variously named merely as we consider its relation to the secular or the spiritual law; whether, with Warburton and Paley, we deny a conscience to the State, and regard considerations of utility as the motive determining its necessary adoption of a National Religion; whether, with Burke, we "think ourselves bound, not only as individuals in the sanctuary of the heart to renew the memory of our high origin and caste . . . . but also in our corporate character to perform our national homage to the Institutor, and Author, and Protector of Civil Society;" or, again, receiving the beautiful theory of Coleridge, were we to look upon the Christian Church as the soul which underlies and animates the body politic,—as "the sustaining, correcting, befriending,

[1] Gladstone, "The State in its Relations with the Church," 4th ed., vol. i. p. 4.

opposite of the world, the compensating counterforce to the inherent and inevitable defects of the State, as a State ;" or, in fine, travelling beyond the theories for which our own Church is more or less responsible, were we to accept either the theory of Hobbes, according to which the Church and her Religion are mere creatures of the State, or the opposite extreme of Ultramontane Romanists, which holds the temporal power to be wholly dependent on, and subordinate to the Church:—on each and all of these theories we shall find the provinces of Civil and Ecclesiastical History inextricably intertwined; and no one, whether speculative student or practical statesman, can pretend to a philosophical knowledge of the annals, or the constitution, or the laws of his country, who does not assign, at each era of his country's progress, due weight to the influence of the Church.

Two striking examples will illustrate what I de-desire to express.

1. Perhaps the darkest page even in the story of religious persecution is that which recounts the crusade against the Albigenses at the opening of the thirteenth century. We can easily comprehend the zeal to crush the Manichæan heresy, which prompted ecclesiastics of every rank to take up arms, under the mistaken belief of their age, that the cause of Religion could be promoted by the sword; but it is not so easy, at first sight, to discern the motives that led the chivalry of France to wage a war of extermination against the land of the Troubadours.

De Montfort was, no doubt, a ferocious soldier, and it is not difficult to understand how the fair regions of Languedoc and Provence may have excited his cupidity; but that the great barons of every province of France should have combined in this enterprise, and that the successive armies which moved from Lyons along the Rhone should have assembled to ravage the most beautiful portion of their own country,—the focus of that spirit of chivalry which was absolutely a religion to the knights and warriors of the age,—requires to be explained by some other cause than their hatred of heresy. This explanation we shall find in the civil History of the time. It was the age in which European society attempted republican organization. The towns of Provence, Languedoc, and Aquitaine, aimed at forming themselves into independent communities. In this fact we discern the moving power which led on the army of Simon De Montfort. Besides its character as a religious crusade, the struggle was still more the contest of the feudalism of the North against this attempt at democratical organization by the cities of the South. The religious element was eagerly made use of by the feudal barons, and the crusade established the feudal system in the south of France[1].

2. My second illustration is taken from a critical period in our own history. The schism of the Non-Jurors forms one of the most striking and, I may

[1] Guizot, "Histoire de la Civilization en Europe," 10e Leçon.

add, most romantic incidents of the Revolution of 1688. The men who sacrificed so much, in obedience to the dictates of conscience,—although the majority of the nation felt that their sense of duty was a mistaken one,—exercised an influence on public opinion which no writer of English History has ventured to ignore. A great historian has, indeed, recently thought fit to envelop in a cloud of ridicule the conduct of Sancroft and of those who followed his example; but few thoughtful men will refuse assent to the following judgment of Mr. Hallam: "The necessity of excluding men so conscientious, and several of whom had very recently sustained so conspicuously the brunt of the battle against king James, was very painful; and motives of policy, as well as generosity, were not wanting in favour of some indulgence towards them. . . . The effect of this expulsion was highly unfavourable to the new government; and it required all the influence of a latitudinarian school of divinity, led by Locke, which was very strong among the laity under William, to counteract it"[1].

In thus concluding that the History of the Church must be studied in connexion with general History, I do not forget that the space through which I invite you to accompany me is somewhat extensive; and I feel that this may prove a discouragement to those who enter upon the study for the first time. I can-

[1] "Constitutional History of England," vol. ii. p. 455, 4to ed.

not even promise that our progress will be free from difficulty, or that we shall pluck only flowers along our path. Where, indeed, shall you find knowledge acquired without toil, or what aspect of human History can you discern undistorted by human weakness or human error? But I believe that no department of intellectual research can offer more important or more attractive results to students of every class. I speak not now of the professed theologian, the very rudiments of whose science depend upon this knowledge—each phrase and formula in dogmatic theology being expressed in language generated and moulded during those controversies which form one of the most prominent features of Ecclesiastical History;—but I refer to the general body of educated men, whose training is the duty of our Universities, and whose thoughtful and intelligent acceptance of her doctrines our Church has ever invited. I refer to the statesman who draws the maxims of political wisdom from "the philosophy that teaches by examples"—the well-known definition of History in general, one of the most fertile provinces of which is to be found in the History of the Church. I refer to those who desire, from whatever motive of amusement or instruction, to trace the fortunes of mankind; and who, in the great drama performed by human beings on the world's wide stage, during each period of time, will ever find the History of the Church opening out scenes that stir

the soul to its lowest depths,—depicting heroism and endurance which elicit all the sympathies of our nature; genius and wisdom which command the homage of our understandings; holy lives which we should all aspire to emulate; lessons of duty which we should strive, with prayer, to observe.

Nor can any one have failed to notice that those portions of general History which involve a record of the fortunes of the Church are ever the most attractive. We hear, again, in such episodes, the voice of our common nature, which is drowned amid the crash of arms or the fall of empires; and the humanizing influence of Christianity casts a cheering light across the dark page that tells the story of political intrigue or of national crime. The reading of any person of ordinary education will furnish abundant proofs of this. You are all aware, for example, how many chapters of Gibbon's great work—throughout which he studiously brings forward those facts that admit of scenical treatment—are devoted to the affairs of the Church; and you surely have felt, when her History is the theme, that his narrative possesses a charm which neither the monotonous rhythm of his rhetoric, nor the measured cadence of his sneer, can weaken or dispel. Indeed, the records of the Church are so necessarily and inseparably connected with all the highest interests of man, that, though they were regarded merely from a worldly point of view, they naturally offer to the reflecting mind a degree of at-

traction which political details, or dynastic changes, or even the "pomp and circumstance of war," can seldom present.

Permit me to quote, in illustration of my general meaning, the words of a well-known writer, which forcibly describe a defect that has long characterized general History, but of which the modern school of historians has, at last, become conscious:—

"What good is it to me though innumerable Smolletts and Belshams keep dinning in my ears that a man named George III. was born and bred up, and a man named George II. died; that Walpole, and the Pelhams, and Chatham, and Rockingham, and Shelburne, and North, with their coalition or their separation ministries, all ousted one another, and vehemently scrambled for 'the thing they called the rudder of government, but which was in reality the spigot of taxation.' . . . . Mournful, in truth, is it to behold what the business called 'History,' in these so enlightened and illuminated times, still continues to be. Can you gather from it, read till your eyes go out, any dimmest shadow of an answer to that great question: How men lived and had their being? . . . . . For example, I would fain know the History of Scotland: who can tell it me? 'Robertson,' say innumerable voices; 'Robertson against the world.' I open Robertson, and find there, through long ages too confused for narration, and fit only to be presented in the way of epitome and distilled essence, a cunning answer and hypothesis, not to this

question: By whom, and by what means, when and how, was this fair broad Scotland, with its arts and manufactures, temples, schools, institutions, poetry, spirit, national character, created and made arable, verdant, peculiar, great, here as I can see some fair section of it lying, kind and strong (like some Bacchus-tamed lion), from the Castle-hill of Edinburgh?—but to this other question: How did the king keep himself alive in those old days; and restrain so many butcher-barons and ravenous henchmen from utterly extirpating one another, so that killing went on in some sort of moderation? In the one little Letter of Æneas Sylvius, from old Scotland, there is more of history than in all this. At length, however, we come to a luminous age, of lasting importance, and full of interest for us; to the age of the Reformation. All Scotland is awakened to a second higher life; the Spirit of the Highest stirs in every bosom, agitates every bosom; Scotland is convulsed, fermenting, struggling to body itself forth anew. To the herdsman, among his cattle in remote woods; to the craftsman, in his rude heath-thatched workshop, among his rude guild-brethren; to the great and to the little, a new light has arisen: in town and hamlet groups are gathered, with eloquent looks, and governed or ungovernable tongues; the great and the little go forth together to do battle for the Lord against the mighty. We ask, with breathless eagerness: How was it; how went it on? Let us understand it, let us see it, and know it!—In reply, is

handed us a really graceful and most dainty little scandalous chronicle (as for some journal of fashion) of two persons:—Mary Stuart and Henry Darnley"[1].

The justice of Mr. Carlyle's complaint is now fully recognised. The truth has, at length, been acknowledged, that battles and sieges, the official acts of governments, the changes of dynasties, are not the only *facts* to which historical narrative should extend. The relation of events to each other, their mutual connexion, their causes and their effects, all, in short, that constitutes the philosophy of History, are now universally received among the *facts* that must be studied, narrated, described. Of the events which make up History, thus understood, none have had such influence on the universal interests of the human family, none present such affinities with all that concerns the welfare of man, as the spread of the Christian Faith, the establishment of the Christian Church. The Christian Clergy as a body have ever been men of the people: and no surer index can be found of a nation's civilization at any stage of its progress, than the lives and the intellectual culture of the ministers of Religion. The term *caste*, you should remember, is a term wholly inapplicable to the Christian priesthood. In Oriental forms of Religion, as of civil government, the individual was nothing—caste ruled all. Even the Jewish priesthood was a caste, for the office was he-

[1] "Samuel Johnson," by Thomas Carlyle.

reditary; and the chronicles of the sons of Aaron but partially unfold the history of the children of Abraham. The idea of the corporate body of the Christian Clergy, on the other hand, continually recruited from the mass of the people, has replaced in the Christian Church the idea and the limited spirit of caste. It has rendered the writings of ecclesiastics a faithful transcript of the national characteristics of each country, and ecclesiastics themselves true representatives of the civilization of each successive age. From the writings of ecclesiastics alone can any correct information now be gained as to the reconstruction and development of society, from the fall of the Empire to the close of the Middle Ages. At the commencement of this period, in the towns where municipal institutions survived, sole relics from the wreck of Roman organization, the Bishops and Clergy, by their influence over the people, served as the connecting link between them and their conquerors; and, as time moves on, we find a member of the Clergy everywhere present, from the cottage of the serf at the foot of the feudal castle, to the court of the monarch. Not only were the Clergy the sole possessors of the erudition of their age, they were also, by early association and by actual occupation, the persons best fitted to transmit to us the character of their times. This task they have faithfully performed. Where, for example, shall you find such a picture of the crisis in which the Roman Empire expired as in the pages of an Ambrose, or an Augustine; a

Jerome, or a Gregory the Great? The questions which they discussed are the very questions that still stir the heart, and influence the practice of men:—how moderation is to be suggested to rulers; how the domestic or public legislation of society is to be guided; how religious dissensions are to be calmed; how error is to be resisted; how the heathen are to be evangelized.

From the manner in which Ecclesiastical History is thus essentially united with the general History of the world, its study may, as I have said, at first sight seem to present a hopeless task. It is, however, a characteristic of all inquiries relating to the Church, that each line of investigation may be pursued apart, and with but slight reference to the others. The ecclesiastical records of each country, for example, have a separate department of their own; the growth and cessation of controversies form a distinct branch of the general subject; the ritualist has open to him channels of information that can be followed undisturbed by other inquiries; the proceedings of Councils, the deliberative assemblies which express the sentiment of the Universal Church, may be consulted without invading any of the kindred topics which constitute Ecclesiastical History. That a division of the general subject under distinct heads should be thus feasible, is an immediate consequence of the fact which underlies the notion of the Catholicity of the Church. When entering upon the study of ordinary History, we are encountered at the outset

by a class of questions, in the case of each particular branch of the human family, which do not arise at all in the History of the Church—the questions, I mean, which are involved in the title, "Constitutional History." The origin and progress of governments, the modifications effected by time in the polity of nations, these are questions which involve the most delicate investigations, and demand long and patient research; but no such inquiry is necessary on our part. The constitution of the Church Universal has been fixed from the first by its Divine Founder. "It is evident unto all men," I quote the Ordinal of the Anglican Church—"It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." This was also, one may not unfairly argue, the essential condition of the Church's triumph. Let us only conceive Church-government not to have been fixed in primitive times;—let us imagine differences respecting Ecclesiastical Polity, such as rend, at the present day, the unity of Christian men, to have prevailed when it was the task of Christianity to encounter the civilization of the Roman Empire, and to tame the barbarism of that Empire's destroyers,—and we shall have pictured to our minds a state of things from which God, in His good Providence, has shielded mankind.

This reference to the idea of the "Universal"

Church suggests another preliminary topic. Having stated the extent of the inquiry in which we are engaged, it is necessary that I should also state the point from which, in my opinion, Ecclesiastical History, properly so called, takes its rise. I know, indeed, that, in the Divine Scheme, the Christian Church is but a continuation of the Jewish, and that "the Church in the wilderness"[1] was the type of the Church in the world; but still, there are features characteristic of Christianity, and of Christianity alone among all religions, sufficient to justify our restricting to it this department of History. The very title, "Catholic," to the force of which I have just referred, was abhorrent to the genius and essence of the religion of the Jew:—we learn from Holy Writ how he received the announcement, "That many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven"[2]. But there is another feature of Christianity which distinguishes it not only from Judaism, but from all other forms of religion that the world has ever seen, and which, by rendering the records of the Christian Church the record of the greatest social revolution in the annals of mankind, has traced out for it, in universal History, a distinct epoch of its own.

You remember our Lord's reply to the question, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for

[1] Acts, vii. 38. [2] S. Matt. viii. 11.

another?" "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen *and heard.*" The proofs which evinced that His Religion was Divine were not merely His acts of supernatural power, but a fact which, to His hearers, was no less astonishing: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, TO THE POOR THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED"[1]. I do not know whether this collocation of proofs has ever struck you with surprise:—the "preaching of the Gospel to the poor" is added to the last and greatest of testimonies, that of raising from the dead. Leavened as modern society has been by the influence of Christianity, it may appear somewhat superfluous even to particularize as a characteristic of any form of religion that the poor should partake of its consolations. And yet the Lord places in an equal rank of importance with the miracles that manifested His Divine Glory, the fact to us so familiar, so universally recognised as the duty most incumbent on His Church, that "to the poor the Gospel is preached." Consider the character of the time. The philosophy of the age was addressed to a chosen few. Christianity aimed at making the knowledge of God the common property of all. "The meanest Christian," wrote Tertullian, "has found God, and shows thee practically what thou seekest in God, although Plato[2] says that the

[1] S. Luke, vii. 22.

[2] Timæus, ed. Bipont., vol. ix. p. 303;—the words are frequently quoted by the other Apologists of the time. In China, observes

Creator of the world cannot easily be found, and that, when He is found, it is impossible to make Him known to all"[1]. In this simple characteristic of the Religion of Christ consists the power that has changed the destiny of the world. The social revolution which it effected renders the annals of the Church unique among the histories of mankind, and, of itself, makes the rise and progress of Christianity the greatest crisis in the fortunes of the human race. A brief survey of the state of society at the date of the Birth of Christ will exhibit how great a moral miracle was here performed.

The aspect of the world at this epoch presented an antithesis the greatest that the imagination can conceive:—the office of the Roman Emperor, and the condition of the Slave. Each member of this antithesis calls for some remark. The former, the office of the Emperor, I reserve for my next Lecture; I shall confine myself, for the present, to some observations suggested by the latter.

The Roman world under Augustus was composed of citizens, subjects, and allies,—whom alone the law recognised as entitled to social and political

Dean Milman, "The early Jesuit missionaries assert that the higher classes (the literatorum secta) despised the idolatry of the vulgar. One of the charges against the Christians was their teaching the worship of one true God, which they had full liberty to worship themselves, to the *common people*."—*Hist. of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 15.

[1] "Apologeticus," c. 46.

rights. Beyond these, huddled together with goods and chattels, lay the outer world of slaves, who were allowed no part or interest in the law at all. The mass of the provincial population belonged to the class of *dediticii*—that is, those who had submitted to the yoke of Rome without conditions,—the slaves, as they may be termed, of the great Roman family[1]. The civil wars had exhausted the centre of the Empire more than the provinces ; and the rapid disappearance of the free population had filled Roman statesmen with alarm from the time of the Gracchi. Notwithstanding the efforts of Julius Cæsar and others to check the evil, the lands continued to be almost entirely cultivated by slaves. At a later period domestic slavery attained an extent that may appear fabulous. Athenæus[2] states that many Romans had 10,000 and 20,000 slaves. Pliny[3] tells us that a freedman of Augustus, who had lost much property in the civil wars, left at his death so many as 4116 ; and although some writers regard this as an exaggeration, it has been calculated that for the period between the conquest of Greece (B. C. 146) and the reign of the Emperor Alexander Severus (A. D. 235), the proportion of three slaves to one freeman is a sufficiently low estimate. According to the principles of Roman law, a slave could not con-

[1] See Merivale, "History of the Romans under the Empire," 2nd ed., vol. i. p. 24 ; 1st ed., vol. iv. p. 399.

[2] "Deipnos.," lib. vi. ed. Bipont., vol. ii. p. 544.

[3] "Nat. Hist.," lib. xxxiii. c. 47.

tract a legal marriage ; he was incapable of acquiring property ; his gains belonged to his master, who had also power of life and death over his slave. These powers of the master were declared by the celebrated jurist Gaius to be part of the *jus gentium*. The severity of this code was, no doubt, from time to time, of necessity, relaxed, but the frequent revolts of the slaves against their tyrants sufficiently attest the intolerable nature of their oppression.

The class of gladiators, an institution purely Roman in its origin and to its end, presents the social condition of the slave in its saddest aspect.

The very highest pitch of intellectual culture at Rome failed to perceive that the exhibitions of gladiators were an outrage on humanity. Cicero, to use the words of Gibbon[1], "faintly censures the *abuse*, and warmly defends the *use*, of these sports." Some centuries later, and long after the reign of "the first Christian Emperor," Symmachus, one of the most refined of pagans, and the last influential defender of paganism, notices the *impiety* of some Saxon captives who, by strangling themselves in prison, escaped the ignominy of being thus "butchered to make a Roman holiday"[2]. Tragedy, it has been well observed, had no existence as a part of Roman literature. There was too much tragedy, in the shape of gross reality almost daily before the eye, to allow the natural sympathy that softens at another's woe

[1] Chap. xxx. [2] Lib. ii. Epist. xlvi.

to retain a spark of sensibility. It was not until the same year as the Council of Nicæa, and, it is stated[1], at the instance of the assembled Fathers, that "the first Christian Emperor" partially disapproved of these exhibitions. So late as the year A. D. 404, Honorius was in vain[2] solicited to suppress them; and his subsequent edict, which accompanied their final cessation, was brought about by an act of Christian heroism that merits a passing notice.

Of course the Church, from the first, raised her voice in horror at such scenes of blood. S. Irenæus, and he is followed by S. Cyprian and Tertullian, mentions as the widest departure from the life of a Christian exhibited by the most fanatical sect of the Gnostics, that some of them "did not even absent themselves from these murderous spectacles"[3]. We may well feel astonishment how any pleasure could be felt by the Roman people in these games. The very prince in whose reign Christ was born was so devoted to this pastime, that Mæcenas once reproachfully summoned him away with the words, "Surge, tandem, carnifex." The story told by S. Augustine in his "Confessions"[4] strikingly illustrates the strange fascination with which such scenes were witnessed.

[1] See Jac. Gothofredus, "Cod. Theodos.," lib. xv., tit. xii. t. v. p. 397.

[2] Prudentius, "Adv. Symmachum," lib. ii. 1121.

[3] "Cont. Hær.," lib. i. c. 6—*τῆς παρὰ Θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώποις μεμισημένης τῆς τῶν θηριομάχων, καὶ μονομαχίας ἀνδροφόνου θέας.*

[4] Lib. vi. c. 8.

Alypius was the companion of his boyhood,—as S. Augustine affectionately terms him, "the brother of his heart." On a visit to Rome he had resolved to refrain from such an unphilosophical recreation. Compelled, however, by some fellow-scholars to accompany them to a spectacle of gladiators, Alypius resolved to close his eyes while thus forced to be present. "Though present in body," he said, "in mind I will be absent." At a particular crisis of the contest the fierce shouts of the multitude overcame his resolution, and, "conquered by curiosity, he opened his eyes." The spell was upon him:—the sight of blood overcame his philosophical determination, and he became himself "one of the crowd." He shouted with the rest, his eyes flashed fire, and he was hurried away with wild delight in his enjoyment of the butchery.

The event which led to the final suppression of these exhibitions forms one of the most pleasing episodes in the writings of the old ecclesiastical historians. The occasion was the series of public games lavished by Honorius on the Roman people, in honour of the great victory of Pollentia. A certain monk, writes Theodoret[1], named Telemachus, came from the East to Rome, at a time when these cruel spectacles were being exhibited. After gazing upon the combat he descended into the arena, and tried to separate the gladiators. The sanguinary spectators, possessed by the demon of slaughter, were enraged

[1] "Hist. Eccl.," Lib. vi. 26.

at the cessation of their savage sport, and stoned to death the person who had caused the interruption[1]. But this one death had lasting effects. The impression produced by the murder of Telemachus was so profound as to call forth a prohibitory edict from the Emperor,—which edict, stranger still when we recollect that that Emperor was the imbecile Honorius, was obeyed. The turbulent populace of Rome accepted the mandate, and submitted without a murmur to the law which abolished for ever the human sacrifices of the amphitheatre.

I have paused upon this topic because it affords strong confirmation of the progress of Christianity among the mass of the people. The aristocracy of Rome, as I propose on a future occasion to point out, were, to the last, obstinate adherents of paganism. The abrupt abolition, therefore, of this favourite Roman amusement, without protest or popular tumult, seems to admit of but one explanation,—the growing and widely spread influence, among the lower classes, of the Religion of Christ.

To return, however, to the condition of the world when Christianity was announced to mankind.

Throughout the whole extent of the Roman dominions, every city, every mansion, was divided into two hostile camps, of the masters and the slaves, the tyrants and their victims. This is a fact in ancient

[1] Gibbon's comment on this act of Telemachus is characteristic: his death, he observes, "was more useful to mankind than his life."—chap. xxx.

society which it is essential to keep before the mind; not only as exhibiting one of the chief social evils with which Christianity had to grapple, but also—and this is my principal motive for dwelling upon the subject—because it appears to me to have been the chief *human* instrument through which the Gospel gained its victory. Christianity first proclaimed to the world that all men, of every colour, and every social grade, are in the highest sense equal before their Maker; that all are alike interested in its benefits, joint heirs of its promises. Guided by the Revelation of Christ, Reason has at length perceived, and, in modern Europe at least, has recognised the truth, that the different members of the human family are, by necessity of logic, equal before God, as joint participators in the ruin and the restoration. It is not my province to recount how both the sacred writers and the later Christian teachers treated the question of slavery,—an institution so deeply embedded in the structure of Roman society, and which for so many centuries held its ground in Europe. The story told by Bede of that sale of British slaves at Rome, at the close of the sixth century, which led to the mission of Augustine; the pious zeal of S. Germanus of Paris, at the same period, for the redemption of slaves,—are facts well known to the student of Ecclesiastical History: and, although the various classes of slaves were, in course of time, merged into the "adscripti glebæ," or serfs of the Middle Ages, it is a fact that servitude remained in

Italy down to the thirteenth century[1]. I may, however, remind you of the language, on this subject, of inspired and uninspired preachers of the Gospel: how "Paul the aged" besought Philemon for his "son Onesimus;" how the Alexandrine Clement reckoned among the leading principles of the Faith that "we should treat our domestics as ourselves, for they are human beings as we are; and God, bethink thee, looks impartially upon all, whether they be bond or free"[2]. In accordance with this principle, we find the Church acting in each successive age. The improvement in the condition of the slave population was a subject of constant solicitude to ecclesiastical rulers, and to Councils; and, from the hour that Christianity enjoyed toleration, the highest festivals were appointed as the seasons, and the churches as the place, for manumission[3]. You will easily perceive the important open here offered to the progress of Christianity, and can understand how justly, under social conditions such as I have endeavoured to describe, the "preaching the Gospel to the poor" could be placed by Christ among the greatest miracles.

I shall conclude for the present with an illustration of the principle which I wish to establish—namely, that among the slave population of the Empire the Church found some of her earliest and most numerous triumphs.

[1] Blair, "The State of Slavery amongst the Romans," p. 16.

[2] "Pædagogus," lib. iii. c. 12, ed. Potter, p. 307.

[3] Blair, *loc. cit.*, p. 168.

Rome, as you are aware, is undermined in every direction by subterraneous excavations, forming a maze of unknown extent, and with which we are familiar under the name of the Catacombs. The Romans had inherited from their Etruscan predecessors these excavated labyrinths, formed, in remote ages, in the process of quarrying tufo. We find allusion to these sandpits in writers long before the Christian era. The great increase of the city in the latter days of the Republic led to the reopening of the ancient excavations, in order to procure materials for building; and hence the whole subsoil on one side of Rome was gradually perforated by a network of quarries, which extended to a distance variously estimated at fifteen and twenty miles. Here resorted the "arenarii," or sand-diggers, who, as well as the higher class of workmen, were slaves. Among the Christian memorials represented in nearly all the Catacombs are figures of men bearing instruments of labour, often instruments for the purpose of excavation, and clad in the dress peculiar to the slave[1]. Here, then, among this despised class of the population, the workmen in the Catacombs had provided for themselves and their brethren in the Faith a secure retreat—a retreat which became the established refuge of the Roman Church. The number of the Christian labourers in the Catacombs was in-

[1] These are to be distinguished from the Christian Order of "Fossarii"—see Bingham, "Antiquities," Book III. ch. viii. § 1.

creased, and this garrison of the Church continually recruited from the ranks of those who were condemned, as was the practice at the time, to labour in the sandpits as the punishment for abandoning the ancient Roman faith[1]. If we read of a Christian being dragged before the tribunal, or exposed to the beasts in the Amphitheatre, we are apt to think of him as one of a scattered community, few in number, and politically insignificant. But all the while there existed, literally beneath the surface of Roman society, a population unheeded, uncared for, thought of vaguely, vaguely spoken of,—a population strong-hearted, of quick impulses, nerved alike to suffer or to die; and in numbers, resolution, and physical force, sufficient to have caused their oppressors to quail before them. But the sword had not yet been enlisted in the cause of religion. Submissive, in these "dens and caves of the earth," to the "powers that be," for their Redeemer's sake, the early Christians lived and died; and here they found their sepulchre[2].

In these numerous excavations slaves and persons of the lowest class, who could not afford the cost of a funeral pile, were usually buried. You remember

[1] We read in the "Acts of the Martyrs" that the Emperor Maximian (A. D. 294), in the persecution of Diocletian, "condemned all the Roman soldiers who were Christians to hard labour, some to dig stones, others sand. He also condemned Cyriacus and Sisinnus to dig sand, and to carry it on their shoulders."

[2] See the remarks of Lord Lindsay, "Christian Art," vol. i. p. 4.

how Horace compliments Mæcenas on his having rescued the pits left by the sand-diggers on the Esquiline Hill from so base a use as that of being "the common sepulchre of the vilest of the people"[1]. Here, too, we find again the influence of Christianity. The records of the ancient world prove, what we still see exhibited in the cemeteries of Egypt, that social distinctions survived even death, and that separate burial-places were assigned to the different ranks of society as well as to different families. It was reserved for Christianity first to deposit side by side persons unconnected with each other, except by the profession of a common Faith[2]. For three hundred years the Christians of Rome found sepulture in these recesses; and in the still extant memorials of their trials and sufferings during persecution, we see the purity and the depth of their religious convictions. The very name "cemetery," "place of repose," κοιμητηρίον, found for the first time in the inscriptions of the Catacombs, points to a feeling of hope, and a belief in immortality. Rude though the mural pictures may be, they suggest all that is exalted in heroism, and sublime in charity. We read in the inscriptions no record of their sufferings,—for death was hailed by them as the gate of everlasting

[1] "Huc prius angustis ejecta cadavera cellis
Conservus vili portanda locabat in arcâ,
Hoc miseræ plebi commune sepulchrum."—*Sat.* I. viii.

[2] See Maitland, "The Church in the Catacombs," p. 39. Cf., too, Bishop Kip's pleasing volume, "The Catacombs of Rome."

happiness, which they rejoiced to decorate with pleasing symbols and flowers; we can trace no tokens of hostility against their persecutors, for they had learned that the Christian must forgive: "There is no sign of mourning, no token of resentment, no expression of vengeance; all breathes softness, benevolence, charity"[1].

Let me quote an inscription discovered by Aringhi in the Cemetery of S. Agnes, which comprises almost all that is affecting in the details of ancient martyrdom, as well as the union of different social grades in the bonds of that Faith which drew closely together the master and the slave:— "Here lies Gordianus, Nuncius of Gaul, murdered for the Faith with his whole family. They rest in peace. The handmaid Theophila has erected this"[2]. The uncouth Latinity and strange orthography of these epitaphs afford the clearest proof as to the rank and education of the persons who composed and engraved them; while the same story, eloquent in its simplicity, runs through them all—the story which tells the hope of the Christian, the resignation of the martyr. Enter the hall of the Vatican called Lapidarian or "delle lapidi." On one side of this long corridor you read the collected inscriptions that have been taken from the Catacombs; on the other side are the monumental inscriptions of pagan Rome,

[1] Cf. Seroux-D'Agincourt, "Hist. de l'Art," t. i. pp. 16–28.

[2] "Roma Subterranea," lib. III. c. xxii. p. 337.

gathered from the ruins of "the Eternal City." The thought conveyed by each Christian epitaph, as contrasted with the almost unvarying language of the heathen gravestones, forcibly strikes the mind. The pagan inscription breathes the very accents of despair. Beneath lie buried the love of the survivors, the hopes of the departed; there the dead enter the portals of that tomb which to them is "an eternal home" ("domus eternalis"). "O relentless fortune," wrote a mother over her infant child, "who delightest in cruel death, why is Maximus so suddenly snatched from me?" On another gravestone we read: "To the divine manes of Titus Claudius Secundus, who lived fifty-seven years. Baths, wine, love, make life what it is. Farewell! Farewell!" With such sentiments as these contrast the faith and hope of the following:—"In Christ. Alexander is not dead, but lives beyond the stars. His body rests in this tomb:" or compare the thought which, almost without an exception, is expressed by each Christian epitaph—"In Peace."

LECTURE II.

THE EARLY STRUGGLE OF THE CHURCH.

THE aspect of the world during the earlier centuries of the Christian era presented, as I stated in my last Lecture, a contrast so striking as to tax the utmost efforts of the imagination to conceive it:—the condition of the Slave, and the office of the Roman Emperor. I have already offered some remarks on the relation to the spread of Christianity of the former member of this antithesis; and have availed myself of the facts thence resulting, in order to show that the Christian Church, by inaugurating a complete revolution in the social organization of mankind, has marked out for its History a new epoch as its own. I now turn to the latter of these two phenomena—the office of the Roman Emperor.

With this great institution, regarded politically as expressing the voice of the State, was, of course, deeply concerned the weal or the woe of the Christian as of every inhabitant of that broad belt around the Mediterranean which constituted the Roman Empire. But, if we regard it from another point of view, which shall enable us to examine the claim to divine honours advanced in that age by the Masters

of the world,—a claim which so long and so sadly influenced the fortunes of the early Church,—we shall be naturally led to the subject with which, on the present occasion, I desire to engage your attention,—I mean the slow, and painful, and difficult progress of Christianity during the protracted period of five centuries[1].

In approaching the subject of the dawn of Christianity upon the earth, the facilities afforded for the propagation of the new Religion by the settled government and the tranquillity of the Roman Empire, as well as the impetus which its growth received from the failure of the ancient religions to satisfy the yearnings of human nature, are features of the case which naturally suggest themselves to the mind. The finger of Prophecy had already pointed out the great Western Monarchy as included in the Scheme of Providence for the regeneration of the world: and no portion of the History of mankind is more full of deepest interest than that which accompanies the growth of the infant Church beside "the Decline and Fall" of the colossal Empire of Rome. The harvest was at length ripe for the reapers. The prolonged peace over the earth, and the culmination of Roman greatness under Augustus, mark the epoch in which was born in the manger of Bethlehem the Saviour of the

[1] The leading facts referred to in the present Lecture are discussed by Beugnot, "Histoire de la Destruction du Paganisme en Occident;" and by Dean Milman, in his "History of Christianity" and his notes on Gibbon.

human race. Henceforward each step in the progress of History is marked by the most startling vicissitudes. The gorgeous ceremonial, with which Philip the Arabian commemorated the thousandth anniversary of the building of Rome, was soon followed by the Church's great trial under Decius;—it was also soon followed by the first inroad of the Goths. Many years of bitter persecution had yet to be endured until the final triumph of Christianity succeeded the capture of Rome by Alaric. The closing of the temple of Janus was to a human eye the great event of the age. The general cessation of war, thus symbolized, has ever been referred to, as fitly marking the point of time from which we date the reign of the Prince of Peace. The Assyrian, and Persian, and Grecian Monarchies had passed away. The Roman, as the fourth Monarchy of the ancient world, had absorbed the three great powers that had successively subjugated the human race, and had brought them under the unity of a single will. These withdrawn, neither prince, nor king, nor potentate of any denomination, appeared to break the universal calm which through centuries surrounded the throne of the Cæsars. The barbarians, it is true, were accumulating in vast hordes beyond the Danube and the Rhine: the tempest, however, had as yet given but few tokens of its approach. The frontiers of the Empire were guarded by troops, or bounded by forest and desert; and the proud Roman little dreamed that foes more terrible than Gaul or Carthaginian were slowly gathering

around the borders. The Goth, the Vandal, and the Frank, were still hidden behind a cloud of years; and centuries were yet to elapse ere those masses were hurled on the hapless populations of Southern Europe,—ere the storm had burst which swept away the power of Rome, and the entire structure of Roman society.

The authority, consequently, of the Roman Emperor, when Christianity was first preached to the world, had neither hostility to apprehend from without, nor opposition to encounter from within. His position was one that overpowers the imagination when we approach to contemplate it. Here, the genius of Absolutism meets us in its most appalling form. The Emperor's very title, "Imperator," marked him as the sole representative of the military power, the *Stratocracy*, as it has been happily termed, of Rome. He was himself the great fountain of law, of honour, of preferment, of civil and political regulations. The nobles of every grade were under his immediate censorship; the lowest classes were linked, in a connexion of absolute dependence, to the ruler who provided their daily food. The character of Roman Emperor was truly and mysteriously awful. Gibbon has pictured with much force one of the features of this character, its virtual ubiquity, by supposing the case of a subject who should attempt to evade the Emperor's vengeance. If we take the case of a modern tyrant, he observes, "The object of his displeasure, escaping from the narrow limits of his

dominions, would easily obtain, in a happier climate, a secure refuge, a new fortune adequate to his merit, the freedom of complaint, and, perhaps, the means of revenge. But the Empire of the Romans filled the world, and when that Empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. 'Wherever you are,' said Cicero to the exiled Marcellus, 'remember that you are equally within the power of the conqueror'"[1].

What, then, was the natural and inevitable result produced on the minds of those subjected to this power, thus palpable, as it were, and from whose grasp there was no escape? We find it in the deification of the Emperor, that singular belief of the Roman world, which, at first sight, appears to us so incomprehensible. "Ye reverence Cæsar," wrote Tertullian, "with greater apprehension, and more fervid timidity, than the Olympian Jove himself. . . . . Neither do ye this so much from the dictates of reason, as from the respect which ye bear to his immediate and intrinsic power. In fact, among you, a man had better forswear himself by all the gods than by the simple genius of Cæsar"[2]. These words represent one aspect of the case;—they describe the natural impression produced on the mind of the Roman people by the concentration of all the powers of the State in subjection to a single irresponsible will. The fact may also be regarded

[1] Chap. iii. [2] "Apologeticus," c. xxviii.

under another aspect, not, perhaps, altogether so material.

The religions of the world, transplanted from their native soil to Rome, had lost all their significancy :—the contact, too, of the various mythologies was necessarily followed by their mutual hostility and destruction. Their contradictions could not be reconciled. The political spirit of each alone remained ; and in each case was attracted, as if by an irresistible impulse, to that one self-dependent power which now filled the world. "The worship paid to the genius of the Emperor," observes Ranke, "was, perhaps, the only one common to the whole Empire. All idolatries clung round this, as to a common prop"[1]. Dean Milman, indeed, cannot prevail upon himself to accept this conclusion. His comment on the words of Ranke which I have quoted is : "I am not disposed to think so ill of human nature"[2]. That conclusion, however, of the German scholar I cannot help regarding as both borne out by facts, and as the natural inference from the causes which I have recapitulated. The various forms of religion united in paying this worship. Temples were raised and altars dedicated to the Emperor. Men swore by his name; they celebrated festivals in his honour ; his statues afforded sanctuary. It seems impossible to regard all this as mere excess of adulation, or as main-

[1] "History of the Popes," B. i. ch. i. Austin's transl., vol. i. p. 7.
[2] "History of Christianity," vol. i. p. 29, note.

tained by hypocrisy. It was a belief that grew with the growth and strengthened with the strength of the Empire. Domitian (A. D. 95) caused his Epistles to commence, "Dominus et Deus noster hoc fieri jubet"[1]. Upon medals struck during the lifetime of Aurelian, the Pannonian peasant (A. D. 270), we read the titles, "Deo et Domino nostro Aureliano Aug."[2] Neither the tragical fate of several of the emperors, nor their short tenure of power, at all affected the belief in their divinity. The corpse of the murdered Galba was laid, within a few weeks, in the same cell which had witnessed the suicide of Nero. The united reigns of Nero's three successors amounted to no more than eighteen months and twenty days. But the reverses ascribed to the deities of the national religion had prepared the minds of the Romans for such incongruities;—their faith in the divinity of the Emperors could not be shaken by events which were merely parallel to the tragedies and revolutions of the mythological Olympus. However this may be, the fact is incontestable; and the veneration paid to each successive Cæsar even increased in its intensity. Towards the opening of the fourth century, Diocletian assumed the title of Jovius, Maximian of Herculius:—the motion of the world (so said the panegyrists)

[1] Suetonius, "Domit.," 13. Gieseler writes: "Schon Cäsar liess sich diese Ehren auch in Rom vom Senate decretiren (Suet., Cæs., 76), Augustus nahm in den Provinzen Tempel und Priestercollegien an (Taciti Ann., i. 10; Suet., Aug., 52), und so alle seine Nachfolger nur mit Ausnahme des Vespasianus."—B. i. § 14, s. 37.

[2] Eckhel, "Doctrina Numorum Veterum," t. vii. p. 482.

was maintained by the all-seeing wisdom of Jupiter; the invincible arm of Hercules purged the earth from monsters and tyrants[1]. Even when the Emperors had openly professed Christianity, the belief in their divinity still remained the Roman Creed. Scarcely had Constantine expired, when the Senate enrolled him among the gods. The poet Claudian almost completes the apotheosis of the great adversary of paganism, Theodosius, whose son and successor, Honorius, he deifies from his birth—

"Non litora nostro
Sufficerent angusta Deo"[2].

It is a kind of popular belief to date the final triumph of Christianity from the accession of Constantine. The condition of the Church from this period, if contrasted with her cruel sufferings under his immediate predecessors, renders, it is true, such a belief not unnatural. But the unbending facts of History sometimes reverse the verdict of a courtier's panegyric; and here, too, we are compelled to ask how far "the first Christian Emperor" merits the glory so commonly ascribed to him?

The claims of Constantine to the very name of Christian are something more than problematical; the question, at least, still admits of discussion. I do not argue from the slight influence of the Christian

[1] Lactantius, "De Mort. Persec.," c. 52; Gibbon, chap. xiii.

[2] "De quarto Cons. Honorii," v. 136. Gibbon (chap. xxix.) observes: "An old inscription gives Stilicho the singular title of Pro-gener Divi Theodosii."

Religion upon his actions; nor do I build anything upon that record of domestic crime, which renders the family of "the first Christian Emperor" a second family of the Atridæ[1]:—human nature is ever presenting inconsistencies too startling to render such reasoning legitimate. But one may fairly appeal to the evidence of facts. The original adoption of the Christian cause by Constantine appears to me simply to prove—and to prove nothing more than this—that Christianity had now attained an influence over the world which rendered it a political power. The wide diffusion of the principles of the new Religion—the subject on which I dwelt in my last Lecture—among that class which in modern times we significantly term "the people," could not have escaped the eye of the practised statesman. It seems to be a fact well attested, that Maxentius had endeavoured to revive the spirit of paganism in his own favour, before the decisive battle at the Milvian Bridge. To enlist, therefore, the antagonism of the Christians on his side, appears, from the subsequent history of Constantine, to have been motive sufficient to determine

[1] The well-known verses affixed to the palace gates, comparing Constantine to Nero, exhibit the light in which his acts were regarded by his contemporaries at Rome:—

"Saturni aurea sæcla quis requirat?
Sunt hæc gemmea, sed Neroniana."

Sidonius Apollinarius ascribes these verses to the Consul Ablavius, Epist., lib. v. 8, ed. Simond, p. 138.

him as to the part he should take in this struggle : and the well-known incident of the vision of the Cross, with the suggested motto, " By this conquer," seen, as he marched to the victory that gave him the sovereignty of the world, well symbolizes the political reasons which unquestionably influenced his mind. After he attained the supreme power, although he did not sacrifice to Jupiter,—in general the first act of a victorious Emperor,—he attended the sacred games, he restored the pagan temples in Rome, and assumed among his imperial titles that of Pontifex Maximus. How little influence, to the last, Christian associations had over the mind of Constantine, is illustrated by the curious and, for that age, significant fact, that in the entire coinage of his reign we find a complete absence of Christian allusion, or symbol[1]. To what extent, however, Constantine's subsequent profession of Christianity was sincere, how far his original zeal in its cause was simulated,—are questions beside my present object, which is to bring before you the position of

[1] " Si sacros infimi ævi scriptores audias, obvios esse oporteret Constantini numos crucis, aut etiam ipsa Christi insignes imagine. Testatus utrumque est Joannes Damascenus ("In Synod. ad Theophil.") . . . . . Et refert Sozomenus (H. E. lib. i. c. 8) Constantinum imaginem suam seu in numis expressam, seu pictam in tabulis jussisse semper divino crucis signo inscribi et consignari . . . . . Verum excute universam Constantini monetam, nunquam in ea aut Christi imaginem, aut Constantini effigiem cruce insignem reperies."—Eckhel, *loc. cit.*, t. viii. p. 88.

On this entire question see the first Excursus in Heinichen's

the Church at the opening of the fifth century, respecting which, I apprehend, there exists no small amount of misconception.

As to the relative position of Christianity and paganism at this epoch, M. Guizot observes :—"The first condition in which the Church appears at the fifth century is that of the Imperial Church—the Church of the Roman Empire. When the Roman Empire fell, the Church thought herself at the term of her career, and that her triumph was accomplished. In a word, she had completely vanquished paganism"[1]. And the learned writer goes on to imply that the presence of the barbarians, Goths, Vandals, Burgundians, and Franks, could alone, for the future, occasion her any solicitude. Now, however partially correct this statement may be as to the position of the Church at the close of the period named, were we to suppose it to apply to the commencement of the fifth century, we should form a most erroneous idea of the actual history of the time. I am inclined to think that most persons, on

edition of Eusebius, "De Vita Constantini," p. 505, where a view favourable to the Emperor is taken. When Pagi (on Baronius, A. D. 321, No. 18) notes that Constantine's rescript to Maximus, Præfect of Rome, decreeing that the haruspices are to be consulted, merely amounts to a permission that others should consult them, adding that in the same year the Emperor conferred benefits on the Church,—this defence simply confirms what I have stated in the text. Cf. Niebuhr, "Lectures on Rom. Hist.," Schmitz's transl., vol. iii. p. 318, 2nd ed.

[1] "Hist. de la Civilization en Europe," 6e Leçon.

reading the passage which I have quoted, would picture to themselves the Church in full possession of dignity and power,—the civilized world at her feet, paganism a dream of the past, and the observance of Christian worship universal. It is my present object briefly to show how far nearer the truth is the reverse of such a portrait.

The reigns of Constantine and his successors were professedly a season of equal toleration for both religions. The celebrated edict of Milan went no farther than to recognise Christianity as one of the legal forms by which the Divinity—*Divinitas*, τὸ Θεῖον—may be worshipped[1]. The respectful language in which Constantine still spoke, in his public edicts, of the established paganism has been noticed by writers on this subject. We there read merely the terms—"vetus consuetudo," "templorum solemnia," "consuetudinis gentilitiæ solemnia;" while under his successors we find expressions such as the following—"dementia," "superstitio damnabilis," "stolidus paganorum error"[2]. The Theodosian code, indeed, in laws bearing the respective dates of A. D. 353 and A. D. 356, attribute to the son of Constantine the forcible suppression of paganism. The authenticity of these

[1] See the form as given by Lactantius, "De Mort. Persecut.," c. 48:—"ut daremus et Christianis et omnibus liberam potestatem sequendi religionem quam quisque voluisset, quo quidem Divinitas in sede cœlesti, nobis placata ac propitia possit existere."

[2] Beugnot, i. p. 80.

laws, at least of the dates assigned to them, has been questioned. They certainly were not enforced: for, inscriptions prove that during the reign of Constantius not only were the heathen temples open without restriction, but that sacrifices were offered in Rome, in Italy, and throughout the whole of the Western Empire, in perfect freedom. Julian, though professing toleration, avowedly employed every means to restore paganism to its former splendour. Like many of the most refined among the Romans of that age, Julian seems to have embraced paganism sincerely. A devout and sincere attachment, writes Gibbon, for the gods of Athens and Rome constituted his ruling passion[1]. The cruelty of Constantius to him in his youth filled him with hatred even to the Religion which Constantius professed; and his passions led him on to acts of persecution unworthy of his genius, and inconsistent with his professions of liberality. The sophist remembered that he was an Emperor, and forgot his philosophy. Brutal as had been the persecution of Diocletian, it was open and honest; that of Julian was covert and perfidious. By one act he plundered the churches, alleging that, as the Gospel recommended poverty, he performed thereby a service to the Christians, since he thus

[1] Gibbon adds in a note :—" I shall transcribe some of his own expressions from a short religious discourse which the Imperial pontiff composed to censure the bold impiety of a Cynic (Orat. vii. p. 212.) The variety and copiousness of the Greek tongue seems inadequate to the fervour of his devotion."—Chap. xxiii.

rendered them more worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven[1]; by another, he closed the schools of those Christians who would not confine their teaching to "the study of Matthew and Luke"[2]. Julian's ephemeral hostility passed away; but his successors, although professing Christianity, were not yet prepared to exceed the limits of simple toleration. Valentinian is extolled by Ammianus Marcellinus, and Valens by Libanius, both of them pagans, for the severe impartiality with which they stood between the conflicting religions (A. D. 375). In the following reigns of Gratian and Theodosius we at length discern the beginnings of the triumph of Christianity. Even Theodosius did not attempt to interdict the private exercise of the old religion which still retained so powerful an influence over his subjects,—an influence which time only could overcome.

The ancient worship of Rome possessed a hold over the minds of men, far more tenacious than one who does not closely examine the History of the age can readily bring himself to believe. The idea has been thrown out[3], and, I think, with great justice, that the indiscriminate mockery of all that had been so long held sacred, such as we find in the writings of Lucian, would of itself provoke opposition. Lucian had exhausted the philosophy of unbelief; and

[1] *ἵνα πενόμενοι σωφρονῶσι, καὶ μὴ στερηθῶσιν, ἧς ἔτι ἐλπίζουσιν, οὐρανίου βασιλείας.*—Ep. xliii., Ad Ecebolum, ed Spanh.

[2] Ep. xlii., *ibid.*

[3] Cf. Tschirner, "Der Fall des Heidenthums," s. 401.

absolute unbelief cannot remain the dominant sentiment. The inclination began gradually to develop itself, to mingle together various religions, and to seek in each different system some point of contact with the philosophy of the time. Of this inclination two remarkable examples are afforded by the two Cæsars, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, who ruled the Empire from the year 218 to 235.

At Emesa, a city of Syria on the banks of the Orontes, Bassianus, the first cousin once removed of the Emperor Caracalla, had been consecrated, in his early youth, high priest of the Sun. In the year 218 he was declared Emperor by the army, and assumed the name of Elagabalus, under which appellation the Sun-god was worshipped at Emesa under the form of a black round stone said to have fallen from heaven. The new Emperor erected at Rome a temple for his idol, in which he deposited the most hallowed pledges of the early Roman religion, the Ancilia, the Palladium, and the sacred fire of Vesta. A consort must be chosen for the god of Emesa, and the Moon, adored by the Africans under the name of Astarte, was deemed a suitable companion for the Sun:—her image was transported with solemn pomp from Carthage to Rome. The Syrian, the Roman, and the African religions being thus mingled, Elagabalus cherished the further idea of making the temple of the Sun a point of reunion for the worship of the Samaritans, the Jews, and the Christians; and thus,

in a proper sense, a Pantheon[1]. This, it is true, was merely the project of a dull fanatic; but the same spirit of syncretism appears in the more lofty conception of Alexander Severus, who placed in his private chapel, as objects of worship, Abraham the ancestor of the Jewish race, and Christ the Author of Christianity, as well as Orpheus the founder of the Grecian Mysteries, and Apollonius of Tyana the teacher of Indian and Egyptian wisdom.

In these cases paganism does not come before us as an aggressor: but direct opposition to the Church was not long in appearing.

The foremost place among the hostile systems must, without doubt, be assigned to that reaction of Christianity upon heathenism, that gradual refinement of the old religions, which, by combining certain principles of the Christian Faith with the purer and more philosophical elements of the existing paganism, presented the sole adversary, in the intellectual order, that the Church had to encounter—the Alexandrine Neo-Platonism. The hostility of this system of syncretism did not restrict itself to the weapons of argument, on which philosophy so proudly, and often so falsely, vaunts itself: —the great hierophant of Neo-Platonism, Hierocles, is distinctly named as the author of the persecution under Diocletian. Taking its rise with Ammonius Saccas at the opening of the third century, Neo-

[1] Lampridius, "Anton. Heliogab.," c. iii.

Platonism continued to offer unceasing opposition to Christianity, until Justinian closed the schools of its professors at Athens, in the year 529 ; and long after this its public suppression, the principles of this philosophy continued to exert an injurious influence on Christian literature[1]. The same spirit we find once more in Manichæanism, a form of religion which about the year 270 was announced by the adventurer Mani. The Christian element appears in the titles " Apostle of Christ," and " Paraclete," which he adopted ; Jewish traditions, too, and the Greek philosophy, were not forgotten ; while the Zoroastrianism of Persia, and, apparently, the Buddhism[2] of India, contributed certain of their principles. The foundation of the creed of Mani was, as all know, pure, original, irreconcilable dualism ; the two principles of light and darkness, of good and evil, were the eternal antagonists. It is hard, indeed, to understand how such a system could have had so lasting and so powerful an attraction alike for the highest intellects, and for the peasants of the Middle Ages:—S. Augustine with difficulty avoided this belief; and it possessed an influence over the mind of the West even in the thirteenth century, and during the Albigensian crusade.

[1] See Guizot, " Hist. de la Civilization en France," tome iii. p. 160, who traces its pantheistic principles in the writings of Joannes Scotus Erigena, through the medium of (the so-called) Dionysius the Areopagite.

[2] Milman, " Hist. of Christianity," vol. ii., p. 325.

At the beginning of the fifth century the stronghold of the ancient religion was Rome. In the East its downfall took place at an earlier period; and at the close of the fourth century, like Christianity under the Antonines, paganism, by the mouth of Libanius, makes its "apology" for its public worship. To a stranger, Rome would still have offered all the appearance of a pagan city. The Præfects were almost invariably pagans; the heathen temples were under their protection; and in the time of Valentinian, there appear to have been in Rome 152 temples, and 183 smaller shrines ("ædiculæ"), which bore the name of their tutelary gods, and were used for the purposes of public worship. Some years after the accession of Theodosius to the Eastern Empire, sacrifices were performed as national rites at the public cost; and Libanius asserts, no doubt with perfect truth, that the Emperor dared not endanger the safety of the Empire by their abolition. The Emperor still bore the title and insignia of Pontifex Maximus, religious processions passed along the streets, and the populace thronged to the festivals and the theatres, which still formed part of the pagan worship.

The tone of literary society at this period may be illustrated by a circumstance recorded of Ammianus Marcellinus. He wrote his history at Rome, and recited in public its successive parts as he composed them. This course of recitation was received with much applause; he was crowned and fêted as

he read aloud a narrative in which he compared the Christians to "ferocious beasts." You will remember that Gibbon's account of the state of the Roman Church, under Pope Damasus, is taken from the report of Ammianus.

In order to give you an idea of the religious sentiments of the Roman aristocracy at the close of the fourth century after the birth of Christ, I shall present to you a group of Roman nobles of the highest rank. A selection of the representatives of the most refined and most exalted grade of Roman society, at this period, has been made in a work now little known,—the "Saturnalia" of Macrobius. The author flourished at the opening of the fifth century; and his treatise consists of a series of dissertations on history, mythology, criticism, and various points of antiquarian research, supposed to have been delivered during the holidays of the Saturnalia. The scene is laid at the house of Vettius Prætextatus, who filled the highest offices of the State under Valentinian and Valens. Here, among other topics, for example, was expounded the theory which deduces all modes of worship from the worship of the Sun. There is one remarkable feature, too, of the "Saturnalia" which merits a passing notice, when we remember the subjects discussed, and who the persons were, engaged in the discussion. An absolute silence is observed as to the very existence of Christianity. You remember the comments of Paley on the silence of Jo-

sephus as to our Lord's history, and on the silence of later Jewish writers as to the Christian Religion[1]. The silence of Macrobius affords a still more forcible illustration of this intentional reticence than that adduced by Paley. During the fourth century it was the policy of paganism to affect ignorance of the progress of the Christian Faith. After the sack of Rome by Alaric this silence ceased. Eunapius and Zosimus commenced a fierce polemic against Christianity, of which it was the invariable theme that the misfortunes which now befell the Empire were judgments for neglecting the old worship, and tolerating the strange Religion. S. Augustine's great work, "The City of God," was the Christians' reply. Merobaudes, a distinguished general and a poet in the first half of the fifth century, adopts the same tone ; he even renews the old charge of atheism against the Christians, when he closes a lament with the words—

"Omniaque hæc sine mente Jovis, sine Numine summo"[2].

"The first Christian Emperor" had preceded the pagans in this line of argument. His own victories and the disasters of his enemies were put forward by Constantine as conclusive evidences of Christianity[3].

Macrobius thus introduces us to the leading Roman

[1] "Evidences," Part I. chap. vii.

[2] See Milman's note, Gibbon, "Works," vol. iii. p. 20.

[3] "It is remarkable in all the proclamations and documents which Eusebius assigns to Constantine, some even written by his own

nobles :—If, he observes, " earlier writers have been allowed to bring in the Cottas, the Lælii, the Scipios, discussing questions of high import, I may be permitted to introduce the Prætextati, the Flaviani, the Albini, the Symmachi"[1]. Let me say a few words as to each of these personages, who were devoted pagans, and bitter foes of Christianity.

Vettius Agorius Prætextatus, in whose house the scene of his dialogues is placed by Macrobius, was the leader of the Roman aristocracy, the Præfect of Rome under Valentinian, and perhaps the most favourable specimen of a character which one finds it so difficult to conceive,—that of a sincerely religious Roman statesman, devoutly worshipping the gods 400 years after the Birth of Christ. His death was mourned as a public calamity, and he died without witnessing the degradation of the religion which he loved. His religious sentiments were characterized by that spirit of syncretism which I have already noticed. While he was a member of the Pontifical College, " Pontifex Major" as he is styled in inscriptions, all the religions of the Empire combined to pay him honour. The epithet given him by Macrobius, " sacrorum omnium præsul," is confirmed by the fact that among his titles we find included the highest rank in the

hand, how almost exclusively he dwells on this worldly superiority of the God adored by the Christians over those of the Heathen, and the visible *temporal* advantages which attend on the worship of Christianity."—Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 397.

[1] " Saturnalia," lib. i. c. 1.

Eleusinian, Phrygian, Syrian, and Mithriac mysteries. His wife, Fabia Aconia Paulina, was no less zealous for the ancient faith. She had been initiated in the temples of Eleusis, Lerna, and Ægina; she was hierophant of Hecate, and priestess of Isis. The anecdote told by S. Jerome has been often quoted,—that Prætextatus was in the habit of saying to Pope Damasus, "Make me Bishop of Rome, and I will forthwith be a Christian." Whether we take these words to convey a sarcasm on the state of the Roman Church—as they are understood by Gibbon,—or merely to represent the two religions maintaining towards each other an attitude of outward amity, they afford, as uttered by the pagan Governor of Rome, an instructive illustration of the position of parties at this time.

Prætextatus, as I have said, was "Pontifex Major," or one of the fifteen members of the Pontifical College presided over by the Emperor, for whom was reserved the title of "Pontifex Maximus." This title had been regularly assumed by the Christian Emperors down to Gratian, who, on his accession, had been formally arrayed in the robe of Sovereign Pontiff. But the influence of S. Ambrose now began to be felt. In the year 382, when Gratian was in Gaul, the Senate sent a deputation from Rome to perform the ceremony of *officially* investing him with the insignia of the Pontifical dignity. Gratian refused to accept the symbols of paganism; and the intelligence of this act of the Emperor not obscurely announced to the pagan party at Rome the first overt step in the

separation of the civil power and the ancient forms of worship[1].

Rome had for some time ceased to be the residence of the Emperors. The chief supporters of paganism were now the Præfects, who were almost invariably devoted adherents of the old religion. The necessity of removing the seat of government to a position more central as regarded the Eastern frontier, had been felt before Constantine had fixed it on the shores of the Bosphorus. This idea was first carried out by Diocletian, who selected Nicomedia, on the Illyrian side of the Adriatic. In consequence of this removal of the imperial residence, there arose among the proud Roman nobility what we should term an opposition party to that of the Court; and in the struggle between these parties we trace the last public efforts of paganism. The abandonment of the capital by the Emperors naturally inflamed the animosity of the adherents of the old institutions, while it concentrated their strength. Rome gradually sank in political importance from the first to the fourth or fifth city of the Empire. Even in Italy, Milan and Ravenna enjoyed more of the presence of the Emperor; and the haughty Romans only clung the more fondly to all that reminded them of their former preeminence. The new Religion was gradually associated with this new order of things; and the spirit of party, which ever rallies round what is

[1] Zosimus, iv. 36.

ancient when menaced with ruin or decay, was evoked with all its acrimony[1].

The next members of the group particularized by Macrobius are the Albini, of whom one was Præfect of Rome from A. D. 389 to A. D. 391, and another between A. D. 395 and A. D. 408. S. Jerome highly eulogizes the former, Ceionius Rufius Albinus. The chief labour of S. Jerome's life was to draw over to Christianity the Roman patricians, and to break the bonds that still united them to the old religion. This we learn from his numerous epistles, addressed chiefly to Christian ladies, over whose minds he exerted a powerful influence. Albinus was devotedly attached to paganism, while his children were Christians. Among them was that Læta whose virtues and piety added lustre to the Roman Church in the fifth century. Læta had been married to Toxotius, son of S. Paula, and there is a charming letter from S. Jerome to Læta, now a widow, on the subject of her daughter's education. Her father Albinus, he tells her, still walks in darkness, and he applies to the case of the pagan parent and the Christian child the counsel of S. Paul to a wife united to an unbelieving husband: "Thou art sprung," he writes, "from an ill-matched union, and Paula is the daughter of thee and my Toxotius. Who would believe that the lisping accents of thy little one should chant Alleluias to Christ,

[1] See an article in the "Quarterly Review," September, 1836, entitled, "Downfall of Paganism."

while her grandsire Albinus looks on and rejoices; or that the old man would nurture a child of God in his bosom? A holy and believing family sanctifies an unbeliever. That man is already a candidate for the Faith, who is surrounded by believing descendants. Let him scorn my letter, if he will: his son-in-law did the same before he was a Christian"[1].

The third member of our group is Virius Nichomachus Flavianus, whose family was noted for their veneration of the gods. He was Prætorian Præfect of Italy and Illyricum A.D. 382 and A.D. 392. When, in the latter of these years, on the murder of Valentinian, Arbogastes the Frank proclaimed his puppet Eugenius Emperor, Flavianus at once embraced his cause; and to him is ascribed the saying that, if successful against Theodosius, he would stable his war-horse in the church of Milan. He was in high repute for his skill in divination; and when Theodosius, by forcing the passes of the Alps, had falsified his prediction of victory to Eugenius, Flavianus judged himself worthy of death,—rather, observes the historian[2], for his blunder as a soothsayer, than his crime as a rebel. For a brief period previous to the defeat of Eugenius, idolatry was restored throughout the West. The images of the gods were painted on his banners, and the statues of Hercules and Jupiter were carried at the head of his army. Flavianus obtained from him the restoration of the

[1] Ep. cvii., ed. Vallars. [2] Ruffinus, "Eccl. Hist.," ii. 33.

Altar of Victory; the mention of which brings me to Symmachus, the last member of our group, and also recalls the controversy respecting the Altar of Victory itself, round which paganism fought its last fight, and met its final defeat.

Foremost among his contemporaries as a scholar, a statesman, and an orator, was Quintus Aurelius Symmachus. In his youth he had accompanied his father to Antioch when sent by the Senate, in the year 360, on a mission to the Emperor Constantius. Here he was placed under the charge of the celebrated Sophist, Libanius, the favourite of Julian, and the teacher of S. Basil and S. Chrysostom. Libanius sincerely believed that the national worship of the Empire was superior to Christianity; he regarded the old mythology of Greece as an inexhaustible source of the beautiful and the sublime. From him Symmachus imbibed a higher view of the ancient religion than that which was prevalent at Rome. He returned to Italy convinced that there was still in paganism a principle energetic enough to save society. He would have nought to do with the prevalent syncretism, which had led Prætextatus to combine with the Roman faith the rites of Mithras and Cybele. His devotion to the gods, unaccountable as it may seem if we regard the Roman religion as Cicero and others represent it, appears to have been unaffected and sincere. A festival, a sacrifice, a religious ceremony celebrated with magnificence, were at all times epochs in his life, and caused him to forget, for the

moment, all the evils of his country. One cannot refrain from a smile at the solemnity with which the statesman of the fourth century, the contemporary of S. Jerome and S. Ambrose, writes to his friend Prætextatus:—"My mind is overpowered with grief, that manifold, and oft repeated sacrifices have not yet publicly atoned for the portent at Spoletium. Scarcely has the eighth immolation propitiated Jove; and the eleventh offering of numerous victims has in vain been made to public fortune"[1]. He refers with bitterness to the growing custom which led some of the Roman nobles to absent themselves from the public sacrifices, in the hope of thus gaining the favour of the Christian Emperor: "Nunc aris deesse Romanos, genus est ambiendi"[2]. When accused of cruelty to the Christians in his capacity of Præfect of Rome, he appeals in proof of the falsehood of the charge to the letters of Pope Damasus[3]. This charge of itself illustrates the misunderstanding, to which I have already referred, which subsisted between the Court and the pagan administration of the capital.

As we may easily conceive, Symmachus was actively engaged in the contest between the two religions. For ten years (A. D. 382–392) the struggle, so far as its political aspect was concerned, centered in the controversy respecting the Statue and Altar of Victory which Augustus, after the battle of Actium, had placed in the Senate-house.

[1] Lib. I., Epist. xliii. [2] Lib. I., Epist. xlv. [3] Lib. x., Ep. xxxiv.

History records how Constantius first removed from the hall in which the Senate assembled this ancient monument, a solemn offering at which was the ordinary prelude to their public deliberations; how it was restored by Julian, tolerated by Valentinian, and once more banished by Gratian. Four deputations were voted by the Senate to successive Emperors soliciting its restoration[1]. By the advice of Prætextatus the conduct of this business was now intrusted to Symmachus. Here, again, the influence of S. Ambrose was felt:—his eloquence prevailed in opposition to the rhetorical pleading of the Roman advocate. The Christian party in the Senate was strong enough to resolve upon a counter-petition to the Emperor; and Pope Damasus had forwarded it to S. Ambrose. At an earlier stage in this contest Gratian not only rejected the petition of the pagan envoys, he also withdrew from the temples the public support which they had hitherto received. On the renewal of the Senate's application to Valentinian, in the year 384, the ancient parts of the two religions were for the first time openly reversed. Symmachus[2] invoked the spirit of toleration, or rather of indifference, which Constan-

[1] Gibbon notes:—"The *first* (A. D. 382) to Gratian, who refused them audience. The *second* (A. D. 384) to Valentinian, when the field was disputed by Symmachus, and Ambrose. The *third* (A. D. 388) to Theodosius; and the *fourth* (A. D. 392) to Valentinian."—Chap. xxviii.

[2] Lib. x., Ep. liv.

tine and Jovian had inscribed in their edicts: S. Ambrose, in his celebrated reply, rejects this demand as sacrilege. "You cannot," he tells the Emperor, "serve two masters. They complain, forsooth, that some paltry stipends are withheld, they who never spared our blood"[1]. The defeat of Symmachus gave occasion to a poet of the time to say that Victory was a very blind, or a very ungrateful goddess, since she had so signally abandoned her defender.

The importance attached by the pagan party to the removal of the Altar of Victory proves how well aimed was this blow at the old religion. From the first the importance of the act seems to have been understood on both sides. It was one of the measures of Constantius in his overt hostility to heathenism. Julian lost no time in restoring this symbol of the ancient faith; nor did subsequent Emperors venture, for several years, to renew what paganism regarded as the deepest insult at once to the glory and the religion of Rome.

I cannot leave this part of the subject without saying a word on the well-known story, accepted as historical by Gibbon[2] and not rejected by Gieseler[3] or Neander[4], that Theodosius, subsequently to his victory over Eugenius, placed before the Senate the question, "Whether the worship of Jupiter or that of Christ should be the religion of the Romans?" This is one of those perplexing passages in History

[1] Opp., t. ii. pp. 824, 833.
[2] Chap. xxviii.
[3] B. i. s. 360.
[4] B. i. s. 449: Gotha, 1856.

as to which it now seems hopeless to look for absolute certainty. For myself, I cannot believe the statement. Every element of probability is wanting; and the evidence itself is contradictory. The two authorities for the fact—the pagan historian Zosimus, and the Christian poet Prudentius—give results exactly opposite, each claiming the majority of the Senate on the side of the religion which he wrote to defend. It is almost impossible to persuade one's self that Theodosius could have adopted such a measure; whether we consider his sincere attachment to Christianity, or the fact that for many years the Senate had ceased to exert any influence on public affairs. The date, moreover, assigned by both Zosimus and Prudentius (A. D. 394) heightens the improbability; as it seems to be capable of demonstration[1] that Theodosius did not visit Rome subsequently to the defeat of Eugenius. Gibbon, who after his peculiar manner tells us that "Jupiter was condemned and degraded by the sense of a very large majority," felt this difficulty; and, accordingly, he has changed the date to the year 388–389. But the fact that seems almost decisive of the question is the silence of S. Ambrose and S. Jerome. Can we believe that S. Ambrose would have remained inactive? or that S. Jerome, who directed the consciences of so many members of the Senate, who so continually refers to their conduct in matters of religion, would have

[1] See the authorities quoted in Milman's note on Gibbon, "Works," vol. iii. p. 7; and Beugnot, i. p. 483.

omitted all allusion to an incident so startling, and so important? The only solution which can be offered is, that some one of the debates in the Senate on the subject of the Altar of Victory has supplied the foundation for this story; and that the facts have been misrepresented by the pagan historian, and embellished with wonted exaggeration by the Christian poet.

On the final decision of the question respecting the Altar of Victory, the struggle by degrees grew fainter. Symmachus mourns, with hands upraised to heaven, the growing neglect of the sacred rites: "Dii patrii facite gratiam neglectorum sacrorum"[1]. The ancient worship did not even expire with dignity. One of the last acts of pontifical authority was the capital punishment of an unchaste Vestal[2]. Religious hatred, moreover, now stifled in the breasts of the old Roman party even the spirit of patriotism. When Florence, in the year 406, was reduced to the last extremity by the savage Rhadagaisus, "the oppressed votaries of Jupiter and Mercury respected, in the implacable enemy of Rome, the character of a devout pagan"[3].

The day from which we may date the final overthrow of paganism in its stronghold is the 24th of August, A. D. 410:—the occasion, the capture and sack of Rome by Alaric. S. Jerome, in words ad-

[1] Lib. II. Epist. vii. [2] Symmachus, Lib. IX. Epistt. cxviii. cxix.
[3] Gibbon, chap. xxx.

dressed to Eustochium[1], thus describes the results of "this awful catastrophe:"—"Who would have believed that Rome, exalted so high by her conquests, should have thus fallen! That having been the mother, she should become the sepulchre of her people! That the shores of the Orient, of Egypt, of Africa, once the possessions of the Imperial City, should now be thronged with crowds of her sons and daughters led away to slavery! That holy Bethlehem should daily receive within its precincts those once rich and noble, who now come to beg their bread! We have not the power to aid them; we can only mourn with them, and mingle our tears with theirs." Historians usually illustrate the calamities of the unhappy Romans by the case of "the noble and pious Proba, the widow of the Præfect Petronius"[2], who was compelled to give up everything she still possessed to Heraclian, Count of Africa, in order to preserve her daughters from the fate of other Roman ladies—that of being sold to the slave merchants of Syria. The fugitives did not maintain their dignity. Despoiled of all their former wealth, the proud Roman nobles wandered, in a state of complete destitution, through provinces which their ancestors had ruled as conquerors. History presents few examples of a reverse of fortune so great and so sudden.

[1] "Comment. in Ezech.," lib. iii. Præf., ed. Vallars, t. v. p. 79.

[2] Gibbon, chap. xxxi.

From this period, at length, we may date, as I have said, the final triumph of Christianity. Hitherto the laws which proscribed heathen rites and worship had no actual force in cities such as Rome or Alexandria; the name of *pagan*, which first appears in a law of Valentinian (A. D. 368), at length truly expresses the fate of the old religion now banished from the cities of the Empire[1]. At length had come to pass before the eyes of the world, the event which from the first had been inevitable, and which had long been a reality. The saying ascribed to Julian, when he received his fatal wound, was now openly verified,—νενίκηκας Γαλιλαῖε, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilæan!"[2]

The final overthrow of heathenism in the East was not accomplished until the same period. In the year 389 the Serapeum at Alexandria was still regarded as one of the wonders of the world. When the colossal idol of that magnificent temple was destroyed, even the Christians looked on with awe; and hopes were for some time cherished by the pagans that the Nile would withhold his annual supply, in token of the displeasure of the insulted Serapis. Optatius, a pagan, governed Constantinople in the year 404[3]. At Alexandria the celebrated Hypatia still expounded, down to her death in the year 416, the

[1] "Qui ex locorum agrestium compitis et *pagis* pagani vocantur."—Orosius (A. D. 416), *Histor. Præf.*

[2] Theodoret, "Eccl. Hist.," iii. 25.

[3] See Beugnot, ii. p. 55.

principles of the ancient philosophy, in the school of Plato and Plotinus[1] :—her sad history is finely told in the brilliant romance of Mr. Kingsley. The doctrines of Neo-Platonism were taught at Athens until the edict of Justinian, A. D. 529.

Superstitions, however, which are the growth of ages cannot be at once eradicated. The seeds of heathenism had been too deeply planted in the popular mind to be uprooted even by the convulsions which now rent asunder every social bond. In the last years of the fifth century the celebration of the Lupercalia still lingered in Rome. In the middle of the eighth century, Winifrid, the Apostle of Germany, better known as S. Boniface, complains to Pope Zachary, that his labours among the Franks and the Alemanni had been in many cases neutralized, by those barbarians having witnessed, even in the vicinity of the Roman churches, pagan processions traversing the streets, and pagan customs openly practised[2]. More generally still in the rural districts had the attachment to paganism survived the fall of its idols, and the destruction of its temples. In the middle of the fifth century Maximus of Turin is forced to remonstrate with Christian landholders for tolerating the idolatry of their serfs. He still found it necessary to continue the old polemic against heathenism; to advance arguments to prove that the worship of Venus was immodest, of Mars,

[1] Socrates, "Eccl. Hist.," vii. 15.

[2] Epist. cxxxii., ap. Max. Bibl. Patrum, t. xiii. p. 125.

barbarous, of Cybele, destitute of reason. We even find the worship of Apollo lingering yet another hundred years in Central Italy. Not until the year 529 was the Altar of Apollo on Monte Cassino destroyed by Benedict of Nursia, and replaced by a Christian church. Such was the origin of that renowned Monastery; and this little mountain of Campania received the last sigh of paganism in Italy.

From the details on which I have dwelt in the present Lecture two leading facts emerge,—facts which those who approach the study of Ecclesiastical History should clearly represent to their minds :—

1. The first leading fact is the length of time that elapsed before Christianity was finally triumphant. For more than a hundred years longer than the period which has now passed away since the Reformation, paganism still held its ground. Even in the fifth century the heathen Pontifex encountered the Christian Bishop on equal terms in all but the truth of his cause. The further consideration of this subject I must postpone until my next Lecture.

2. The second leading fact which I desire to impress upon you is the position occupied by Rome in this prolonged struggle with the forces opposed to Christianity. To the last, as you will remember, the metropolis of the world was the stronghold of the ancient worship ; and when we seek for the champions of the Church in her conflict, and in her triumph, our search must not be made at Rome. We turn to the cell at Bethlehem, or to the Numi-

dian seaport, for a Jerome, or an Augustine. When his guilt is to be brought home to the conscience of an Emperor, the prelate who asserts the broken Christian law, and convinces a Theodosius of his sin, is Ambrose of Milan. When the progress of the Arian heresy is to be combated foot by foot, it is in Alexandria that we meet an Athanasius.

Nor is it difficult to discern the reason.

So long as paganism had the mastery, there was a natural obstacle which repelled the intellect of the age from gravitating, so to speak, to Rome, the acknowledged centre of the world's greatness. On the other hand, when this obstacle was removed, the spell which the very name of "the Eternal City" exercised, as it still exercises, over men, as naturally resumed its influence over the Christian mind. Henceforward we find at Rome the foremost intellects of each generation, called forth by the wants of the age, and the special circumstances in which the Church was placed. From this period the series of great men who filled the See of Rome from the First to the Seventh Gregory, were the chief instruments in the maintenance of Christianity, and the preservation of society itself, during the dreary centuries that followed the dissolution of the Empire. The power thus called into existence, and carried to its maturity by the legitimate and inevitable operation of natural causes, was one which produced, as I have said, in its season, an amount of public benefit which no impartial stu-

dent of History desires either to deny, or to explain away. It was a power which, had it been guided by the spirit of the Gospel, or the principles of primitive times, needed not the authority of the False Decretals for its assertion, or the subversion of the independence of National Churches, to give it strength. But its work was accomplished : and then the Papacy, like other human institutions which have fulfilled their task, began to degenerate. As the result, we peruse in the pages of History a record of that struggle to attain both Spiritual and Temporal Supremacy, the character of which has been fitly illustrated, in each case, by its legitimate *reductio ad absurdum :*—the life of John XXIII., and the last days of Boniface VIII.

LECTURE III.

THE LESSONS OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

I REMARKED at the close of my last Lecture, that some further consideration was required in order to enable us to estimate aright one of the leading facts which emerge from the details connected with the final overthrow of paganism.

Four hundred and ten years had intervened between the Birth of Christ and the capture of Rome by Alaric,—an event which may be regarded as at length bringing to light the power which Christianity had attained in the world. The haughty Roman aristocracy, by whose influence the old religion had so obstinately opposed the Christian Faith, was now swept away before the resistless barbarian, never to resume its position, or again assert its sway over men. Paganism, however, still lingered in many districts; and the actual area over which the Church possessed authority was not very extensive. To expect, indeed, that the triumph of the Cross should have been more sudden, or more widely diffused, betrays at once a forgetfulness of the manner in which God interferes directly in the course of His dispensations—for His miraculous in-

terpositions are neither frequent, nor, when exerted, of long continuance; and also of the difficulty of effecting a change in the opinions of mankind. We should remember, too, how intimately connected with the daily, nay, the hourly existence of the Roman, whether in public or in private life, were the rites of his national religion. The deliberations of the Senate opened with sacrifice; the centre of the camp was a consecrated temple; the domestic hearth was guarded by the Penates. Each act of his life, from his birth to his funeral, had its presiding deity; and the highest nobles, even the Emperors themselves, aspired to fill the pontifical offices. Every department of rural life was no less pervaded by the spirit of polytheism:—each feature of the landscape was sacred to the Nymph, or the Faun; each labour of the agriculturist involved the worship of Ceres or Pomona. Though paganism was banished from the cities, centuries must pass away ere men would give up all faith in those—

> "Fair humanities of old religion,
> That had their haunts in dale, or piny mountain,
> Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
> Or chasms and wat'ry depths."

It is most important to dwell upon this fact. To a human eye the progress of Christianity unquestionably appears slow; in certain cases its success even seems doubtful. For consider how we ourselves stand in the middle of the nineteenth century.

How vast is the field still before the missionary of the Cross! It is but as yesterday that the principles of the religion of half the whole human race have begun to be comprehended in Europe[1]. Scarcely yet have we been brought face to face with Buddhism and the religions of the East. I suppose there are few to whom the subject has suggested itself who have not, at times, felt dismay at this thought, and despondency at this prospect. It is only by the study of Ecclesiastical History that we can satisfactorily combat the influence of such feelings. Without entering upon the question as to when Miracles ceased, it is plain that at a certain point the visible intervention of supernatural agency was withdrawn. The new element infused into human nature was henceforward to encounter by its own Divine energy the resistance of a heathen world: and the gradual and tardy triumph of Christianity leads the student of History to the inevitable conclusion, that it was not the purpose of God to effect an immediate revolution in the moral condition of man; but to instil those principles which, under His unceasing guid-

[1] I take the following numbers from the "Colonial Church Atlas" for 1850:—

Population of the world, ...	860,000,000
Christians, ...	260,000,000
Jews, ...	4,000,000
Mahometans, ...	96,000,000
Idolaters, ...	500,000,000

ance, were, in due time, to work out His beneficent design. The record of the progress of Christianity proclaims on every page that "the Lord is not slack, as some men count slackness;" and we know that here, as elsewhere, the only hope of mastering the obstacles which we have to encounter, lies in our thoroughly comprehending the difficulties of our task.

I propose in the present Lecture to glance not only at the progress of the Church, but also at some of the impediments that have checked her growth since the period of her public recognition by the State. It is not within my province to do more than remind you, as I pass on, of those events of our time, which invest this whole subject with so thrilling and universal an interest. Of course, any observations I can now make must be so brief as to be wholly superficial. My object is to induce you yourselves to penetrate beneath the surface; and for this purpose I desire to lay down, in the first instance, two principles, which should, I conceive, be our guide throughout every branch of this inquiry.

1. And, first of all, you must not apply the rules of Logic to the facts of History. No amount of inconsequence in events should perplex you; no well-attested result, however surprising or apparently unreasonable, should render you sceptical as to the matter of fact. If you remember, on the one hand, that History involves the record of human passion and human prejudice, you will cease to feel astonish-

ment if your anticipations are not always verified. On the other hand, if you admit that the world is the theatre of the acts of Providence, you cannot, as you read the narrative of those acts, question the marvels of the issue on account of the insignificance of the means by which it has been brought to pass. The special department of History with which we are concerned, that of the growth and progress of Christianity, were we even to forget its miraculous source and supernatural guidance, affords the most obvious illustration. The "seed" was "cast into the ground;" it has "sprung and grown up," we "know not how"[1]. Or, to turn to the ordinary records of the world, what speculative inquirer, taking as his premisses extent of territory and numerical population, can safely predict the destiny of nations? Though you take statistical tables as your guide, and construct your syllogisms in Barbara or Celarent, where shall you obtain as your conclusions the battle-field of Marathon, or the History of modern England?

2. The second principle which I would lay down is of still greater importance. You must never study the History of the past without making due allowance, in your estimate of characters or events, for

[1] S. Mark, iv. 26. This fact, as an argument for Christianity, has been the theme of Apologists in every age:—

"Se 'l mondo si revolse al Cristianesmo,
Diss' io, senza miracoli, quest' uno
È tal, che gli altri non sono 'l centesimo."

DANTE, *Paradiso*, xxiv.

the degree of civilization, and for the tone of opinion, of the age in which you live. You cannot judge of the motives that actuated men in the tenth century by the spirit of the nineteenth. This simple truism, so often and so strangely neglected, is, after all, but the precaution necessarily taken in every branch of scientific research. The historian must allow for the social influences of each century in bending events, no less than the astronomer must allow for the influence of refraction. Time is to the one, what the atmosphere is to the other. The historian should not suffer himself to be led into error by forgetting how the tone of morality or of intellectual culture, at any period, deviates from that of his own, any more than the mariner should suffer himself to be led astray by forgetting the variation of the compass. In fine, the very instruments with which observers must work, in every department of inquiry, are themselves defective. The views of those writers on whom the historian must rely as his authorities, may be warped, or wrongly graduated, no less than the material of the sextant, or the index of the barometer ; and for this, due allowance must in both cases be made, or the results will be alike affected with inevitable error. I need scarcely impress upon you the importance of this principle in regulating our estimate of events and of men. By attending to it we shall be the less liable to misinterpret actions, to criticise the opinions of any period too harshly, to condemn with undiscriminating censure faults which

should be imputed to the age, rather than to the individual. While, on the other hand, we can all the better appreciate the moral grandeur of those great men whom the Spirit of Christianity elevated above the standard of their generation; and whose lives and teaching shed around them a light, which all the darkness of the times in which they lived was not able to overwhelm.

Christianity has at length triumphed:—but far different is the aspect of society from that which presented itself to the first preachers of the Gospel. When you remember that the theatre in which the new Religion was proclaimed was the Roman Empire, and that Augustus was its ruler when Christ was born, you have before your minds a picture of prosperity, and pride, and power, the colours of which no description can heighten. When, on the other hand, you remember that the event by which the position of the Church was at length secured, was the capture by the Goths of "the Eternal City," you have again before your mind a picture no less expressive. To form a conception of the fabric thus overturned, we need only consider the light in which the world has ever regarded its memory. Europe still lingers on the idea of the Roman Empire; and, although this is but a shadowy sentiment now, there were centuries throughout which the influence of this idea was as beneficial as it was real. The History and even the legends of Rome had kept alive, throughout the Middle Ages, the remembrance of

its civilization and its grandeur. To comprehend the power of this idea some five hundred years ago, we need but turn to the great poem of Dante; in whose mighty verse the Cæsar who has transmitted to all time the immortal laws of Rome relates the course of the "sacred sign,"—

> "Beginning from that hour when Pallas died,
> To give it rule,"

till it had accomplished in Judea,

> "Vengeance for vengeance of the ancient sin"[1].

But what description can adequately represent the condition of Europe subsequently to the death of Theodosius the Great? Take, for example, the reign of his son and successor, Honorius. Events the most unexpected succeed each other without apparent cause or connexion. Commotions the most fearful are followed by a calm no less fearful. Civilization is gradually overpowered; philosophy is silent; literature degenerates. The very life-blood of society begins to stagnate. All throbs wildly, and again is stilled, like the pulse of the dying. Rome was captured by the barbarians; and from that hour we may date that complete dissolution of national life, from the elements of which modern Europe has arisen. The entire structure of government was overthrown; social order was swept away

[1] "Paradiso," vi., Carey's transl.

by the universal deluge, and the "fountains of its great deep were broken up." For six hundred years from this period the people groaned under that iron yoke, which gradually assumed the form of the Feudal System. Not until the tenth century do we see the idea of Royalty, with government as its mission, emerging from the tyranny of Feudalism; and we wait for three hundred years longer for the establishment of regal authority and well-defined nationalities[1].

The rural population, whether slaves or "coloni," suffered, after the fall of the Empire, more than any others, from the chronic prevalence of violence and anarchy. The condition of this class continued to deteriorate[2]: witness the incessant revolts of the peasants from the tenth century onwards. Among the Clergy alone, under whose rule the people were ever eager to place themselves, could the spirit of benevolence or justice be found[3]. During those dreary centuries, the one resting-place for the mind distracted and wearied with the narrative of war and tumult is the History of the Church. Throughout this age of anarchy and brute force, the one tie that

[1] Guizot, "Hist. de Civilization en France," tome v., 13e Leçon, et 14e Leçon.

[2] Cf. Hallam's "Middle Ages," chap. i. part 1.

[3] See the letter, quoted by M. Guizot, *loc. cit.*, tome iv., 8e Leçon, from Pope Gregory the Great to the Subdeacon Peter, regulating the imposts to be exacted from the bond-labourers of the Church in Sicily:—Lib. 1. Ep. xliv., Opp., t. ii. p. 533.

held society together was the principle of Christian brotherhood;—the one agency that had power to build again its ruined fabric was that exerted by the Christian Clergy. The decomposition of the Roman Empire, and the foundation of the barbarous kingdoms into which Europe was now divided, left nothing almost remaining of what had constituted the ancient world. The Church alone survived, and gained power in the midst of so many ruins. "From the bosom," observes M. Guizot, "of the most frightful political confusion that the world has ever known, arose, perhaps, the most extensive and the purest idea that has ever rallied mankind,—the idea of Spiritual Society"[1].

The principle of Church authority is purely intellectual. I do not mean to imply that the recognition of this principle has not degenerated into superstition; or that the exercise of the authority itself has not been abused and perverted, so as to assume that most irrational and repulsive form of power—a spiritual despotism. Were I inclined so to misrepresent facts, the stern voice of History would speedily proclaim the falsehood. But no one can have studied the records of those dark ages of violence, and bloodshed, and wrong-doing, without being compelled to feel that, with all their faults,—and do not forget that Churchmen are but men,—the individual members of the Clergy, and the great Prelates, and the

[1] *Loc. cit.*, tome i. Leçon 12me, p. 424.

Councils of the Church, were, in truth, the very "salt of the earth," without which the total decomposition of nations and communities could not have been checked.

Consider the Clergy merely as the preservers and maintainers of knowledge.

During most of the period which we are considering, profane literature had ceased to exist; sacred literature stands alone. Take the case of the Englishman, Alcuin, at the opening of the ninth century, whose labours, in the single point of rescuing ancient manuscripts from the condition into which they had fallen, demand the gratitude of every scholar. Or, again, to touch upon a subject more practically religious, of deep importance at all periods,—at the present day, as you are aware, it forms a topic of much discussion,—I mean the subject of preaching, we find in the sermons of the Clergy models which no divine need scorn to imitate. Let me read you the comment of M. Guizot, who had just quoted a passage from a sermon delivered at the beginning of the seventh century by our countryman, S. Columbanus, reproving the want of sanctity and faith amid outward monastic asceticism:—

"Open the sermons of modern times," he observes; "they have evidently a character more literary than practical. There is nothing of this kind, nothing literary, in the sermons of which I have just spoken; no preoccupation about speaking well, about artistically combining images, ideas. The orator goes to

the facts. He desires to act; he turns and returns in the same circle. He does not fear repetitions, familiarity, even vulgarity. He speaks briefly, but he begins again each morning. This is not sacred eloquence ; it is religious power"[1].

But the grand work of the Church, her special vocation, and the chief means whereby she effected that process of the restoration of Society to which I have adverted, was her missionary labour. While the last Emperors were sending against the barbarians armies demoralized and conquered beforehand, the Church sent forth those bands of devoted men who extended everywhere the doctrines of the Gospel, and thus gained over to the cause of civilization more adherents than Rome lost subjects. Let me give a single illustration of how essential to the settlement of society, and the re-organization of national life, was the dissemination of Christianity, considered merely as a political agency[2].

The introduction of the German race into European society—and the conquerors of the Empire were nearly all Germans—was an event of the highest importance. It put an end to the perpetual inroads of the barbarians, which rendered the reorganization of States impossible. It closed the principal route by which the nomad tribes of North-

[1] *Loc. cit.*, tome ii., 16e Leçon, p. 148.

[2] See Mignet, "Memoirs Historiques; Introduction de l'ancienne Germanie dans la Société civilisée."

ern Europe and of the plateaux of Asia had advanced from time immemorial to the shores of the Ocean and the Mediterranean, overturning all that they encountered on their passage. A barrier was thus formed capable of casting back those savage hordes, which, like a torrent increasing in volume as it advanced, successively inundated the countries of the West and of the South.

The physical characteristics of the central and northern regions of ancient Europe presented no attraction to a population disposed to settle on its soil, and desirous of advancing to a state of civilization. Barren steppes, extensive plains covered with marsh and forest, an ungenial climate, afforded a gloomy contrast to the luxuriant vegetation and smiling skies of the South. United to the Eastern Continent along the chain of the Oural for many hundred miles, Europe was exposed, lower down, to the invasion of the inexhaustible wandering tribes of Asia, on the side of the Caspian, and by the gates of the Caucasus. For many ages Europe could oppose but a feeble resistance to the assaults of a Continent of which the mass is nearly four and a half times its own. Besides, it received the nomad population of Asia on the least defensible portions of its frontiers. Two great roads lay open to the invaders:—that which leads by the North, in the valley of the Rhine, and that which leads by the East, in the valley of the Danube. The weight thus cast upon Europe gravitated towards its extremities, the

peninsulas of Greece, of Italy, and of Spain,—defended though these countries were by the natural ramparts of the Balkan, the Alps, and the Pyrenees. On these barriers, concentric layers, as it were, of barbarous populations pressed irresistibly, as they moved onward from the Wall of China to the Alps. Each tribe, as it felt the shock, communicated the impulse to those in contact with it, and the result was a constant advance of invader after invader. Horde after horde was gradually forced on to the maritime frontier of Europe, and was there overwhelmed by the pressure of those that followed.

The Romans had extended the frontiers of their Empire to the banks of the Rhine and the Danube. They advanced no farther, although they had reached this limit nearly five hundred years before the fall of their power. They had tried in vain to penetrate the compact mass which extended to the North of these two great rivers. The loss of the Legions of Varus had proved the warlike genius of the population, and denoted too surely the disasters which were still future. But a new power was at hand to accomplish the task which ancient Rome had failed to execute.

Christianity was now the sole bond that united the western world,—the sole principle by which it was animated, the sole force which placed it in action. By means of the Church, having converted the barbarians its conquerors, the old world was enabled to transform the countries which were

the seat of barbarism itself. The Rhine and the Danube ceased to be the limits of civilization. Two great movements took place. The one bore on Christianity, with often checked, but never wearied course, from South to North; the other, from North to South urged successively the Gauls on Italy and Greece, the Germans on Gaul and the Roman world, the Sclaves on Germany, the Tartars on Russia and Poland. The same instinct of self-defence which had drawn the Romans to the Rhine and the Danube had led the Merovingian kings to the same policy, in order to preserve Italy from invasion, and to intercept the passes of the Alps. But "the Merovingian Franks," observes the historian, "had not taken Christianity as the auxiliary of their conquests; they had employed the arms which subdue, they had not availed themselves of the civilization which transforms"[1]. Their efforts proved vain: their zeal for adventure subsided; and their vassals shook off their yoke. In the year 719, the Austrasian Franks having resumed the warlike spirit of their ancestors, S. Boniface offered himself as the Missionary of Germany. Ecclesiastical History tells the story of his labours; of his success; of his martyrdom, in the year 755, by the barbarians of Saxony. The years that followed present a mournful contrast to the peaceful conquests of Boniface; and the History of Charlemagne re-

[1] Mignet, *loc. cit.*, p. 52.

counts the obstinate resistance and the final subjugation of the Saxons.

Since the year 792, after a bloody struggle of thirty-two years, Saxony has formed an integral portion of civilized society. Within the line of civilization which Charlemagne pushed forward on the Continent, were now comprised all the peoples of Germanic race, speaking the same language, holding the same creed, governed by the same laws. Christian Germany, at first bounded by the Elbe and the Danube, by degrees exerted an influence on the tribes which roamed to the Oder, or even to the Vistula; and prepared them for the gradual reception of the Gospel. The chiefs of those very Saxons who were still barbarians in the year 789, and who had been the determined foes of the Christian name, were, a century later, at the head of the movement of civilization towards the North, became the rulers of Germany, and the Emperors of the West. In the ninth century Saxony proved the rampart of Western Europe against the Danes and Norwegians; in the tenth century, it converted them to Christianity. In the same tenth century, Otho the Great[1] defeated, on the banks of the Danube, the Magyars of the Kama and Volga. The Mongols, who had invaded the vast space between the frontiers of China and the Vistula, who had subjugated all the tribes

[1] Gibbon, chap. lv.

of the Sclave race, and threatened, by covering Europe with their hordes, to re-establish their nomad life on its surface, were, for the first time, vanquished in the year 1241 by Conrad, King of the Romans, and Henry, son of Frederic II.[1] The Tartar conquests did not pass the German frontier. In fine, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Germany arrested the progress of the last invasion, and hurled back the Turkish armies, whose advance had filled Europe with terror. And thus, the German race, amalgamated by Christianity, spread civilization through the North, and repelled on the South the inroads of the barbarians; thus deciding, in favour of Europe and of the world, the question so long at issue between civilization and barbarism[2].

But to return to a somewhat earlier period.

The calamities of the Empire were not altogether fraught with evil to the Church. The invaders were more willing to embrace Christianity than had been the subjects of the Roman Empire. In the middle of the third century the first invasion of the Goths interrupted Decius in his career of persecution. In the year 251 he lost his army and his life in Mæsia, the modern Bulgaria, at the great battle of Forum Terebronii; and historians are careful to tell us that the great disgrace of the convention made by his successor Gallus with the conquerors, consisted in his consenting to leave in the hands of the Goths "a

[1] Gibbon, chap. lxiv. [2] Mignet, *loc. cit.*, p. 162.

great number of prisoners of the highest merit and quality"[1]. Within a few years, under the reign of Gallienus, occurred repeated inroads of the same barbarians, who overran the Eastern Empire; and in their third naval invasion perished the pride of paganism, the famous temple of Diana at Ephesus. On their retreat they again carried away captives, of whom many were Christians. Here, too, the slaves subdued their conquerors; and the gentle doctrines of the Christian Religion seem to have touched to some extent the hearts of these barbarous warriors. The families of the captives supplied the priesthood of this young Christian community; and we find a Gothic bishop with a Greek name, Theophilus, at the Council of Nicæa.

Though professing Christianity, the invaders were, speaking generally, for many years, devoted to the Arian heresy. Of this fact we have not far to seek the reason. Instruct a child,—and the understanding of the untutored warrior from isolated Scandinavia, or the Hercynian forest, was not more developed than that of a child,—Instruct, I say, a child in the transcendental mystery of the Christian Faith, and the difficulties which the child invariably starts, and the doubts which he proposes, will account, without need of further explanation, for the side taken by the barbarians in the great controversy of the fourth century. A no less simple ac-

[1] Gibbon, chap. x.

count may be given of another feature in the History of the invaders. As soon as they had passed the Rhine or the Danube, they feel no disinclination to become Christians :—did they remain in their fatherland, the missionary must toil for centuries before they would abandon the worship of Thor and Odin. The absence of a sacerdotal caste among the German races—for their chiefs were at once their military leaders and their priests—explains this fact. The chiefs maintained or abandoned their former creed, according as it promoted or opposed their warlike designs. The Germans followed their leaders as faithfully to baptism as to war. In Gaul, Clovis led with him the majority of the Frank warriors to the Cathedral of Rheims : and, with Sigismund, the Burgundians passed from Arianism to the Catholic Faith, with as much facility as they had abandoned paganism for Arianism. The motives that induced the barbarian chiefs thus to embrace Christianity when once they had settled down within the Empire may, I conceive, be explained as follows. Christianity had now penetrated the mass of the rural population. It was clearly the policy of the conquerors to conciliate the inhabitants of the districts where they settled ; to win to their side those who provided the harvests which must support the invading army, or who, if provoked to hostilities, could intercept its supplies, and carry on that most harassing species of opposition, —a guerilla warfare. In the dissolution of all ordinary social ties, Christianity was the one uniting

principle now remaining in the world. To profess themselves Christians, therefore, at once created a common sentiment between the invaders and that class of the Roman population of which alone they need fear the hostility.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to remark that the course of events which I have endeavoured to illustrate, however ultimately beneficial to the progress of Christianity, was attended with dire disasters to the Church of the time. Countless instances might be adduced; and they constitute the normal state of what I cannot call the *society* of this epoch. But the mere mention of a single individual will convey the substance of volumes.

The lapse of ages has not lessened the impression produced on the minds of men by the name of Attila. All have heard the saying, so worthy of his ferocious pride, that the grass never grew where his war-horse had trod; nor can the character of the savage Hun be more tersely described than in the words so unjustly applied to a great Roman: "Gaudensque viam fecisse ruinâ." As regards the Church, one need not travel beyond the epithet which he was pleased to insert among the titles of his royal dignity,—"The Scourge of God."

But however opposed to her rapid extension were the evils with which the Church had to contend from without, the evils which sprang up within her own bosom had a still greater tendency to retard her progress. This is the page of Ecclesiastical History over

which we must blush, while we sigh. It is the page, however, from which the most salutary lessons are to be inferred. I will touch upon two of those dark spots upon what should be the Church's unsullied garment,—internal divisions, and the spirit of persecution.

The former may be fitly illustrated by the Donatist Controversy.

In the days of the Church's early trials a question of great practical moment had arisen, which gave occasion for the development of an error that has exhibited itself, under some form or other, in every age of Christianity down to our own time. There were many in the Christian community whose constancy was not proof against the horrors of persecution; who, in a greater or less degree, had fallen from the Faith. When the storm had passed by, numbers mourned over their weakness, and sought, with penitence, to be restored to the Church. Hence the question, How should the Church treat such cases? This question, which in its own nature was but temporary, was merged in another, which has ever been a fruitful source of dissension among Christians:—the question as to the characters by which the True Church is to be known. Is there any, or what, distinction between the Visible and the Invisible Church? Can that community claim the title of "the Body of Christ" which tolerates in any of its members the commission of a single sin?

The Novatianists would show no mercy in such

cases; they excluded a fallen brother for ever from Church communion. The title which they assumed of Cathari, or Puritans, is significant of the many points of resemblance that may be traced throughout this entire controversy between the stern Novatianist of the third or the fiery Donatist of the fourth centuries, and the Fifth Monarchy men of the seventeenth. Let me mention, in passing, one trifling point of analogy, which shows that human nature is in all ages the same. One of the best-known traits of the Puritanism of the Great Rebellion is the array of grotesque names assumed by the Roundheads. In Africa, in the fourth century, among the names of Donatists preserved in the records of Councils, or in the inscriptions of letters of that period, we meet with names no less grotesque :—"Quod vult Deus," "Deo Gratias," "Habet Deum." The principles of Montanism had prepared the fervid mind of the Africans for the Puritanism of the Novatianists. Novatus of Carthage, no less than Novatian of Rome, was the moving spirit of this party; which, again, was but the prelude of the melancholy strife which, under the name of the Donatist Schism, rent the Church of Africa for one hundred years, and did not wholly cease till the African Church was swept away by the Saracenic invasion.

In the course of this controversy blood was first shed in strife between Christians. Africa had long been the granary of Rome. The wild tribes of whom we read in the pages of Sallust, and still read in the

despatches of French Marshals, had become industrious agriculturists. Christianity had spread among them; and their numerous rural settlements had become Christian bishoprics. But the savage was only half tamed; and no sooner had religious discord invaded these peaceful districts than the Christian was lost in the fierce child of the desert. The severities exercised towards them by the imperial officers enabled the Donatists to inflame the enthusiasm of this fiery peasantry; and gave rise to those cruel ravages of the "Circumcelliones," as their adversaries called them, from their scattered cottage life,—or, as they styled themselves, "Soldiers of Christ," "Agonistici"[1]. When the Vandal Genseric desolated Africa, the "Circumcelliones" were among his most efficient allies; and "the calamities of war," to borrow the words of Gibbon, "were aggravated by the licentiousness of the Moors, and the fanaticism of the Donatists"[2].

A fatal blow had been inflicted from within on the great and flourishing Church of Africa. It was the Church of Tertullian, of Cyprian, of Augustine. Her martyrs had been the first to confess the Faith in season of persecution; in days of heresy her orthodoxy had ever been unshaken; her Councils commanded universal respect; her great Prelates had ever asserted the independence of the African Church against the

[1] S. Augustine, "Enarr. in Psalm. cxxxii.," § 6, t. iv., p. 1487.

[2] Chap. xxxiii.

attempts at usurpation by the bishops of Rome :— and now her own dissensions prepared the way for her fall. The close of the seventh century witnessed the conquest of Africa by the Saracens. Mohammedanism, as you know, dates its rise from the 20th of September, A.D. 622[1]. At the beginning of the next century it had inundated the south of Italy, nearly the whole of Spain, the south of Gaul. On Gaul its assault was even more impetuous than had been that of the German nations on the borders of the Rhine. It was repelled from the gates of the West by Charles Martel, in the year 732, at the great battle of Tours. Africa alone continues to bear the yoke of the false prophet.

In the year 698, Carthage yielded to the arms of Hassan. Its very ruins have perished ; and the History of Carthage is the History of the African Church. The Nestorian and Jacobite communities in Persia and Syria ; the Greek Church in modern Turkey ; the Copts in Egypt ; notwithstanding their subjection to the rule of the Moslem, have all maintained their Faith. Of the countries wrested from Christendom by the Mohammedans, in North Africa alone has Christianity ceased to exist. In the eleventh century, three bishops could not be found to proceed to a canonical Consecration[2]. At the present

[1] This is the date assigned by Dr. Weil, in his "Mohammed der Prophet."

[2] See Milman, "Latin Christianity," vol. iii. p. 122.

day even this remnant of the African Church has disappeared. You seek in vain for some trace of Christianity in the land of Cyprian and Augustine; or you are startled at meeting such a passage as the following in the columns of the "Times"[1]:—

"I have passed several days at Batna, partly tempted by the beauty of the scenery, partly by the frank hospitality of the camp at Lambessa, but even still more by the wonderful ruins of the Roman city. . . . . I may say, however, that, under the shadow of the forest hills, upon which the lion, the panther, and the wild boar, range, a Roman city, which once held 50,000 inhabitants, and where ninety bishops assembled in council, lies in ruins. . . . This beautiful city, in a beautiful plain, is worth a pilgrimage. It was only discovered twelve years since"[2].

Now remember that Donatism was no heresy that assailed a doctrine of the Creeds[3]; no protest against the ritualism or government of the Church; no refusal to accept Scripture as its guide or its rule;— it was merely one of those systems with which the history of modern times has made us so familiar.

[1] Oct. 31, 1856: "The French in Africa. From an occasional Correspondent."

[2] Cf. Pellissier, "Exploration Scientifique de l'Algerie," vol. vi. p. 388; S. Augustine, "Cont. Donat.," lib. vi. c. 13, t. ix. p. 169. S. Cyprian writes: "Significavi tibi Privatum veterem hæreticum in Lambesitana Colonia nonaginta Episcoporum sententia condemnatum."—Ep. lv. p. 84.

S. Augustine, indeed, writes of Donatus: "Apparet eum non Catholicam de Trinitate habuisse sententiam;" but he is careful

You have seen the result of its separation from the Church. In perusing its History, we read the literal fulfilment of the warning in the Apocalypse :— "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil. Thou hast borne, and for My Name's sake hast laboured. Nevertheless thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place"[1]. I know no lesson more fearful, or more pregnant with warning;—no lesson that so forcibly impresses upon every Christian man the appeal of S. Augustine when he dwells upon the disunion of Christians, as contrasted with the power which the pagans of his day gained from their being united:—"They have many gods who are false; we have but One who is the True: and yet they remain united, while we cannot maintain concord. O my brother, return to unity!"[2]

The history of religious persecution comes next before us.

to add: "In hunc ejus errorem Donatistarum multitudo intenta non fuit; nec facile in eis quisquam, qui hoc illum sensisse noverit, invenitur."—*Lib. de Hæres.*, c. lxix. t. viii. p. 21. While he defines heresy to be "schisma inveteratum" ("Contr. Crescon.," lib. ii. c. 7, t. ix. p. 413), he also says of the Donatists: "Qui se negabant hæreticos."—*Lib. ad Bonifac.*, c. vii., t. ii. p. 654.

[1] Rev. ii. 2–5. [2] "De Utilitate Jejunii," t. vi. p. 619.

It would be easy to dilate upon this topic: to show that the employment of force by a Religious Society is in its very nature unlawful—for the exclusive territory of Religion is the human conscience; and that unity, if effected by force, cannot but be factitious and fraudulent. "The conduct of God," writes Pascal, "Who disposes all things with gentleness, is to place Religion in the understanding by reasons, and in the heart by Grace. But to wish to place it in the understanding, and in the heart, by force and by menaces, this is not to place Religion there, but terror"[1].

One leading maxim which History inculcates, and of which the records of Christianity afford the fullest illustration, is the length of time that must elapse before Truth can be recognised, or its principles acted upon. There are two such principles which Christianity has proclaimed to the world,—that all men are brethren, and that conscience is free. I have already touched upon the former, when alluding to Slavery as an institution of ancient society. It was not till our own age —and the honour has been reserved for our own country—that a nation has proclaimed the emancipation of the Slave. For our own age also has been reserved the recognition—at least the practical recognition—of liberty of conscience. The history of intolerance, it has been said, is the history of the

[1] "Pensées," 2e partie, chap. iii., ed. Faugère, tome ii. p. 178.

world; for human nature unceasingly tends to compel others to share either its belief or its scepticism:—even in the classic land of freedom, the fate of Socrates proves how universal is this tendency.

The principle of freedom of thought first announced by Christianity was comprehended by its early followers[1]; but the season came when the principle was forgotten. In the year 385 occurred an event which the Christian must mourn to the end of time. In that year Priscillian, a noble Spaniard, with some others, was tortured and beheaded as a heretic at the instance of certain bishops of Spain. This was the first death inflicted, in the name of Christianity, as the penalty of religious error.

In this transaction two circumstances deserve our notice:—

(1) Firstly, the indignant protest of the leading prelates of the day, S. Martin of Tours and S. Ambrose (whose conduct has extorted the praise even of Gibbon), and Pope Siricius.

(2.) The second noteworthy particular is the country with which religious persecution originated,—the country of the Inquisition and of Philip II. From that hour the genius of religious intolerance has brooded over Spain. We have seen how religious disunion has destroyed a Church; we here see how religious intolerance has destroyed an Em-

[1] Cf. Tertullian, "Apol." c. xxviii.; S. Chrysostom, "De S. Babyla," t. ii. p. 540. For further authorities see Limborch, "Hist. Inquisitionis," ed. 1692, c. v. p. 16.

pire. "The witnesses of History are events examined by the light of ages." Let us then summon before our mind Father Valverde beseeching the hapless Inca to embrace the Cross and submit to Baptism, promising that by so doing his death at the stake should be commuted for death by the garotte,—while, to complete the picture of such a conversion, "the Spaniards," we are told, "stood around muttering their *credos* for the salvation of his soul"[1]; let our imagination recall the scenes once enacted at Valladolid or Seville, and let us follow that sad procession styled, as if in hideous mockery, "an Act of Faith;" let us read over once more the biography of Alva;—and we need feel small surprise at the contrast between the monarchy of Charles V. and the Spain of 1857.

The example of the execution at Treves was not lost on after times. Let us pass on to the thirteenth century and the Albigensian crusade—the bloodiest drama ever enacted in either civil or religious warfare. Here the highest prelates led on their divisions; they took part in the battle and the siege. It was in this war, at the storm of Beziers where the number of the slain is set down at fifty thousand, that Abbot Arnold, Legate of the Pope, issued the command "Slay them all; God will know His own:"—words which worthily inaugurated the foundation of the

[1] Prescott, "History of the Conquest of Peru," vol. ii. p. 131, ed. 1850.

Order of S. Dominic, no less than its natural and speedy sequel, the Inquisition[1].

The name of the Inquisition calls up associations which one does not love to dwell upon. Each feature of that institution is alike abhorrent to every sentiment of Christian charity and every honourable impulse of human nature. The honest bigot who persecutes because "he thinks he does God service," has, after all, something lofty in his character, which we feel while we condemn. He does not shrink from acting on his convictions. If the victim is to perish, "he will keep the raiment of them that slay him." Such a bigot once was Saul of Tarsus; such a bigot lived and died S. Louis. But, in the laws of the Inquisition, as if cruelty, and treachery, and espionage, were not characteristics sufficiently odious, it was ordained that hypocrisy also should signalize its pro-

[1] Count Joseph de Maistre condemns this mode of stating the connexion between the Order and the Inquisition:—"Quelques incrédules modernes, échos des Protestants, veulent que saint Dominique ait été l'auteur de l'Inquisition, et ils n'ont pas manqué de déclamer contre lui d'une manière furieuse. Le fait est cependant que saint Dominique n'a jamais exercé aucun acte d' inquisiteur, et que l'Inquisition, dont l'origine remonte au Concile de Vérone, tenu en 1184, ne fut confiée aux Dominicains qu' en 1233, c'est-à-dire douze ans après la mort de saint Dominique."—*Lettres sur L'Inquisition Espagnole*, p. 3. The *term* "Inquisitio" may, indeed, be traced to a date anterior to the foundation of the Order; but, in the sense in which all the world understands the word, the statement in the text will, I apprehend, be found correct. See Du Cange *in voc.*

ceedings. The Church must not be soiled with blood. The civil power becomes its executioner: and the Inquisitor, as he delivers the luckless heretic to "the secular arm," gravely assures him that the magistrate has been "earnestly entreated that he would be pleased to mitigate the severity of the laws with regard to the punishment of your person; that it may be effected without danger of death, or mutilation of limb"[1].

When such was the practice of the Church, can we feel surprise that the noblest spirits of their age did not rise above her example? I have mentioned the name of S. Louis. "He had kingly qualities," Dean Milman writes, "of the noblest order: gentleness, affability, humanity towards all his believing subjects; a kind of dignity of justice, a loftiness of virtue, which prevented the most religious of men from degenerating into a slave of the clergy"[2]. And yet what does the admiring chronicler select as the trait which best exhibits his devotion to Religion?—"If, as a laic, he heard a man to be an unbeliever, he should not dispute with him," the King said, "he should at once run that sword into his entrails, and drive it home"[3].

[1] I take these words from the registered memorial of the final proceedings against Fulgentio Manfredi, as given by Mr. R. Gibbings in his learned tract, entitled: "Were 'Heretics' ever burned alive at Rome? A Report of the proceedings in the Roman Inquisition," p. 50.

[2] "Latin Christianity," vol. v. p. 4.

[3] Joinville, "Histoire du Saint Louis," 1e partie, § 27.

I pass on two centuries, and see Huss and Jerome before the Council of Constance. By whom, we ask, was Sigismund forced to violate his pledged safe-conduct, and the Church led on to imbrue her hands once more in blood? It was John Gerson, the philosopher, "the very Christian Doctor," the man whom Bossuet could pronounce worthy of being the author of "that universal work," the "De Imitatione Christi," and whose claims to its authorship are to this day vigorously maintained. It was a sight to make the angels weep. It is to us some consolation to remember that Religion even here had her champions; and that the prelate who strove to turn the Council from its unholy course was the Englishman, Robert Halam[1].

I need not pause on the sixteenth century, and the reign of Charles IX.: that reign, it has been well said, has but a single date, the night of S. Bartholemew[2]. I pass on once more to a period nearer our own time, to the age of Louis XIV. The History of this

[1] "Ungeachtet einige Prälaten versucht, die Väter des Conciliums zu einem mildern Verfahren gegen die Ketzer zu stimmen und der englische Bischof Robert Halam mit bedeutungsvollen Worten sich gegen die Verdammung der Ketzer zum Scheiterhaufen ausgesprochen hatte: 'Gott will nicht den Tod des Sünders, sondern, dass er sich bekehre und lebe.'"—Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigmund's*, s. 202.

Robert Halam was Bishop of Salisbury in the year 1407, was elected Cardinal in 1411, and died at Constance in 1417: see Godwin, "De Præsulibus Angliæ."

[2] Jules Simon, "La Liberté de Conscience," p. 121.

era presents the narrative of the Dragonades, and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Nothing, I suppose, can show more clearly how deeply the principles of persecution still continued to darken the intellects of Christian men, than the fact that a Bossuet could select the author of those deeds as the theme of a panegyric, and those deeds themselves as the subject of his eulogium[1].

The Reformation had intervened: but the lessons of intolerance, enforced by the practice of centuries, were not to be at once unlearned. The finger of History points sternly to facts which should neither be dissembled nor forgotten. I shall read you a few lines from the simple narrative of the chronicler of the reign of Elizabeth:—"A. D. 1575. The two-and-twentith of Julie two Dutchmen, anabaptists, were burned in Smithfield, who died in great horror, with roring and crieng." "A. D. 1579, Matthew Hamont, by his trade a ploughwrite, of Hetharset, thrae miles from Norwich, was convented before the bishop of Norwich, for that he denied Christ our saviour. . . . For the which heresies he was condemned in the consistorie, ... and afterwards, to wit, on the twentith of Maie, he was burned in the castell dich of Norwich"[2].

[1] "Oraison funèbre de Le Tellier," Œuvres, tom. xvii. p. 504. —"Touchés de tant de merveilles, épanchons nos cœurs sur la piété de Louis. Poussons jusqu' au ciel nos acclamations, et disons à ce nouveau Constantin, à ce nouveau Théodose," &c. &c. The passage is quoted by Jules Simon, *loc. cit.*, p. 98.

[2] Holinshed, vol. ii. pp. 1261, 1299.

Let us leave England, and turn to Geneva. In that city Servetus was burned alive on the 27th of October, 1553. Under the date A. D. 1546, Calvin thus wrote to Farel :—"Servetus lately wrote to me, and coupled with his letter a long volume of his delirious fancies, with the thrasonic boast, that I should see something astonishing and unheard of. He takes it upon him to come hither, if it be agreeable to me. But I am unwilling to pledge my word for his safety, for if he shall come I shall never permit him to depart alive, provided my authority be of any avail"[1].

To the present hour, the laws of Sweden with reference to the exercise of Religion—and here I shall use an expression the most forcible that language can supply or History suggest—are scarcely to be exceeded in intolerance by even the laws of Spain.

The facts which I have thus rapidly glanced at clearly show that, after a certain period in the Church's progress, the spirit of intolerance is not peculiar to any age, or to any stage of civilization. "A sort of fatality," it has been truly said, "urges on those who wish to conquer reason without enlightening it. When men do not know how to be apostles, they must resign themselves, sooner or later, to become executioners"[2]. The most fiendish deeds which the history of persecution records can plead

[1] "Letters of John Calvin," compiled from the Original MSS. by Dr. Jules Bonnet, vol. ii. p. 19. Edinburgh, 1857.

[2] Jules Simon, *loc cit.*, p. 75.

in excuse the hideous sophism—Let the body perish, that the soul may be saved. Religious persecution, to apply a well-known saying, "is worse than a crime; it is a blunder." Picture to your minds Galileo in his cell, and the Inquisition invoking against him the words of Revelation; and yet, where is the theologian now, where the Inquisitor, who regards the earth as immovable, and as the centre of the universe?

All the rigours of persecution have failed to banish schism or heresy. I have already spoken of Donatism:—for centuries it maintained its ground in spite not only of the arguments of the Church, but of all the severities of the civil power. The descendants of the Arian barbarians perpetuated their heresy in Italy:—Arianism was still prevalent, in the tenth century, in the districts of Padua, Verona, and Vicenza[1]. The execution of Priscillian did not convince the Manichæans of the falsehood of their principles:—the kindred views of the Paulicians again crept into Europe from the East; and after the year 1000 this heresy had spread over Germany, France, and Italy[2]. The Crusade against the Albigenses attests its tenacity, and its prevalence. Nay, in this same thirteenth century the idea not of heresy merely, but of infidelity, was quite a familiar one in Italy; and, side by side with Aquinas and

[1] Ughelli, "Italia Sacra," t. v. pp. 429-33.

[2] Gibbon, chap. liv.; Muratori, "Script. Ital.," Dissert. lx., t. v. p. 82.

Bonaventura, there was working among the learned of the day, among those who influenced fashion and opinion, a spirit of scepticism and irreligion which found countenance and sympathy in the refined and enlightened Court of Frederick II. A hundred years passed away, and the memory of the Albigensian massacres did not restrain the fanaticism of the "Apostolic Brethren;" or warn from their fate Fra Dolcino and the fair Margarita. The deaths of Huss and Jerome did not stay the wild war-chariots of Ziska, or quench the ardour of Procopius; and when, at length, the Hussite war came to an end, and the hopes of Bohemia perished with Procopius on the field of Lepan, the Reformation was distant but a hundred years.

The fact of these schisms and heresies repeated and multiplied from age to age, the very existence of the Inquisition three centuries before the Reformation, are the answers which Ecclesiastical History gives to the taunt, so untruly cast on the great religious movement of the sixteenth century, that sectarianism and heresy are its special characteristics, its peculiar and legitimate offspring.

Persecution, then, has failed to establish Truth. Men have, at length, begun to recognise, and partially, at least, to act upon the great principles that Thought is free, and that, in the domain of Conscience, there is no ruler but God. The practical exercise of these principles may justly be taken to indicate that Civil Government is in possession of power;

and that a Church is in possession of Truth. There is no surer test of our belief in the Divine origin of our Religion, than the conviction that it can conquer by its own unaided strength. Truth may be oppressed, maligned, almost extinguished; but its final triumph is certain. It were an insult to Reason to question this; as it is an outrage against Reason to employ force to insure it. This is a maxim proclaimed by the voice of Inspiration itself:—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power."

Having offered at the outset some general remarks on the nature of Ecclesiastical History, its extent and its limits, the attractions which the study presents, and the profit to be gained from pursuing it, I next proceeded to point out some of the chief impediments which have obstructed the progress of Christianity, which have either originally checked the rapidity of its advance, or subsequently wasted its power. I have indicated some of the lessons that may be gathered from the History of the Church, and glanced at their practical importance:—to moralize upon this topic, however, is not the province of the historian. His duty is restricted to the impartial statement of facts. I have already explained how extensive, according to my view of the relation of Ecclesiastical to Civil History, is the field which such facts occupy; and since, as you are aware, my tenure of this Professorship is limited[1], I am com-

[1] The Professorship of Ecclesiastical History in this University is held for five years.

pelled to mark out for myself some special branch of the general subject.

I propose, therefore, to enter with you upon a topic of much interest,—a topic which, from its very nature, illustrates that divisibility of Ecclesiastical History into separate departments, to which I alluded in my opening Lecture:—I propose to consider the causes remote and proximate of the Reformation. Commencing from the fifth century—that epoch in the annals of the Church which I have pointed out as determining the contest of Christianity with heathenism,—I propose to examine, one by one, the chief evils which gradually sprang up corrupting the purity of the Faith; as well as the changes produced by time in the aspect of the world, and in the tone of its civilization.

Many of the particulars embraced by this definition of the subject which I have marked out for our consideration, will readily suggest themselves to your minds:—the growth of superstition; the gradual accretion of doctrines unknown in primitive times; the tyrannical exercise of Church authority; the unholy Interdict—which, perhaps more than any other ecclesiastical abuse of the Middle Ages, raised up a spirit of opposition against the Clergy; the usurpation of the Papacy. Nor shall we, I trust, forget to dwell upon the standing protest maintained, from the earliest period, against the supremacy of the Bishops of Rome, by our predecessor and present companion in the same controversy—the great Oriental Church.

I would neither palliate nor deny the deviations from the purity of the primitive Faith, which now characterize that Communion. But, we should remember, on the one hand, the proverbial tenacity of the Eastern mind; and, on the other, how the working of its restless spirit was arrested, during the darkest season in the History of civilization, by the incessant assaults of the Moslem. Imagine the storm-tossed waves to become frozen on a sudden, and the turmoil of waters to be transformed into an ice-bound sea, and you shall have formed some conception of the condition of the Greek Church, since the day when Mohammed the Second alighted from his war-horse before the gates of S. Sophia[1]. You should remember, too, the maxim long since uttered by the poet of all time,—

Ἥμισυ γὰρ τ' ἀρετῆς ἀποαίνυται εὐρυόπα Ζεὺς
Ἀνέρος εὖτ' ἂν μιν κατὰ δούλιον ἦμαρ ἕλῃσιν.

The various influences to which I have thus slightly alluded had long fermented in the minds of men. A new impulse was now added to the growing spirit of opposition to the authority which the Church had, for some ages, claimed. On a sudden, on the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, the sources of ancient learning were thrown open to the world. The Republics of ancient Greece are the undying witnesses of the cause of Liberty. The place

[1] See Gibbon, chap. lxviii.

which Greece once filled in Universal History at length received its explanation ; and the remains of her immortal literature now taught Europe the great lessons of freedom. The enthusiasm with which those lessons were caught up, how the discovery of printing fanned the rising flame of knowledge,—these are topics to which I hope, at a fitting time, to return. All, in short, served to prepare for, and to inaugurate, the great Religious Revolution which was approaching :—a New World even now opened its shores, to transmit to the yet untrodden regions of the West the rekindled torch of Truth.

THE END.

By the same Author.

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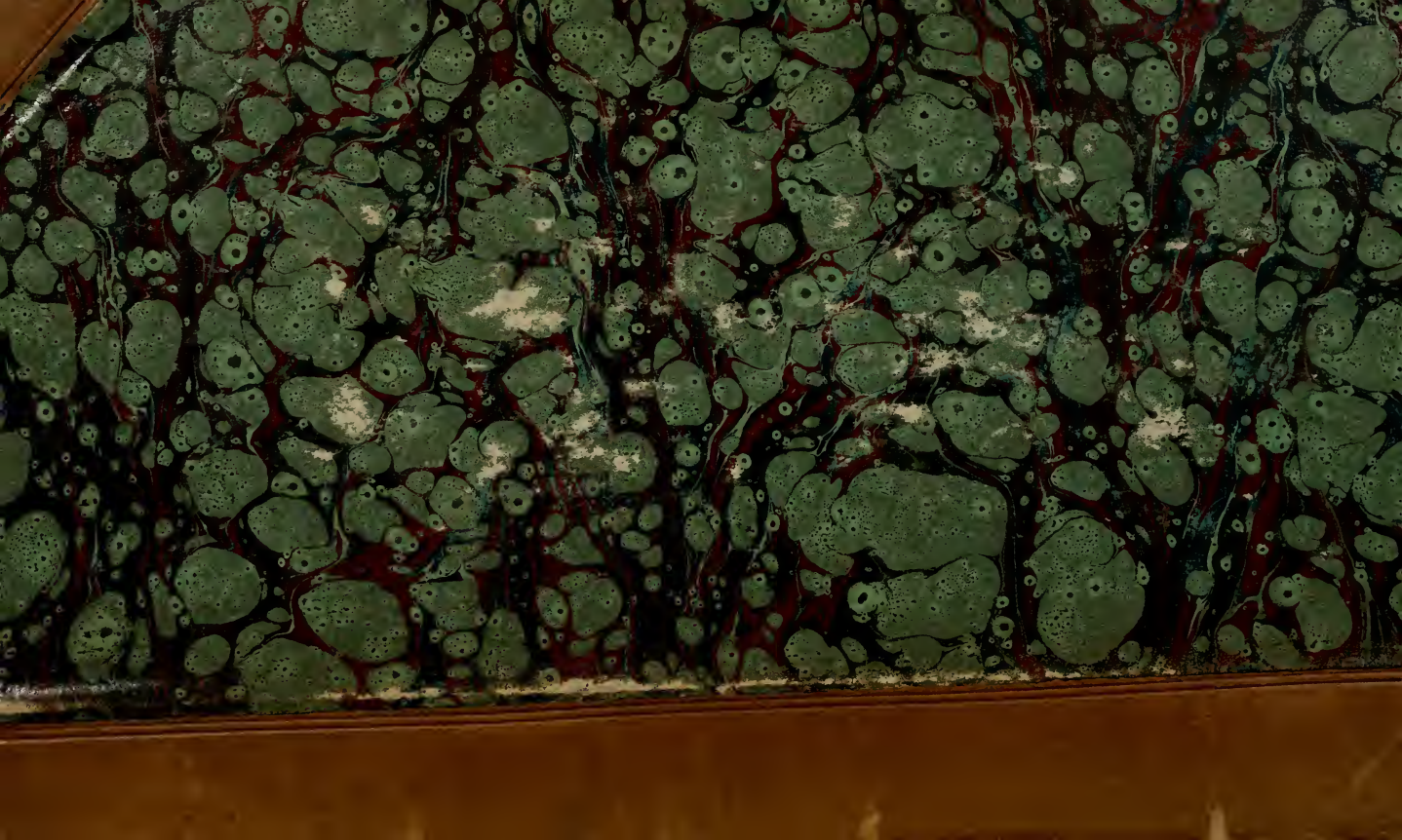
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